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## THE ‘WRITING’ ON THE WALL

*Images of Resistance and Authority in Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia I’s  
Wall Paintings in Gwalior*

### Abstract

Sources concerning the Scindia Marāthā dynasty dating to the colonial and post-colonial eras describe the close political, cultural, and personal relationships the kings enjoyed with the British Raj. Mahārājā Jayaji Rao Scindia (r. 1843–1886) remained loyal to the British, rather than supporting Rānī Laxmi Bai, the rebellious widowed queen regent and fellow Marāthā of the neighboring princely state of Jhansi during the Mutiny of 1857, for which he was honored with a knighthood, the prestigious Star of India medal, and a twenty-one-gun salute. His son and heir Madhav Rao I (r. 1886–1925) enjoyed a friendship with King George V and Queen Mary. When Edward VII and his son, the future King George, visited the Scindia capital of Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh) on their royal tour of India in 1905, Madhav Rao’s opulent display of hospitality was unmatched by any other Indian ruler. However, the thematic content of a group of murals that Madhav Rao commissioned during the early twentieth century and located in private royal spaces complicates this perceived mutually congenial relationship.

The aim of this essay is twofold. It examines four previously unpublished early twentieth century mural programs in Gwalior that Mahārājā Madhav Rao commissioned. These are located in the private reception (*darbār*) hall at the former Scindia palace, in a queen regent’s *chhatrī* (cenotaph), in the royal office complex, and in the entrance of a palace complex. It then proceeds to analyze the thematic content of the murals and their possible meanings to their diverse audiences. The *darbār* hall and *chhatrī* were exclusive, royal Scindia spaces, and their murals challenge conventional understanding of Anglo/Marāthā relations. With their prevalence of glorified images of notorious enemies of the British—including Napoleon, the Rānī of Jhansi and other Indian figures who were antagonistic to British imperial expansion—these two mural programs indicate that the Scindias’ public display of support for their colonial overlords may have been only part of the story.

The office was a more public space that was likely to have been visited by members of the Raj. Accordingly, Madhav Rao had to be more cautious with his choice of subject matter for the wall paintings. In contrast to the murals in the *darbār* hall and *chhatrī*, the office murals ignore the subject of Empire. They are dominated instead by images that focus exclusively on glorifying the House of Scindia, referring to their power, piety, and legitimacy to rule Gwalior, which had an already long history of rule under different Indian dynasties when the Scindias established it as their capital during the late eighteenth century.

HISTORY HAS BEEN UNKIND to the Marāthās. Scholars tend to overlook them in favor of the Rajputs, who, between the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, were the Marāthās' feudatories and neighbors to the northwest. When the Marāthās are mentioned, they are overwhelmingly portrayed as uncouth pillagers and self-serving opportunists, who burst onto the central and north Indian political stage from their homeland in the Deccan to fill the power vacuum created by the waning Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Like the Rajputs, the Marāthās belong to the martial and ruling *kṣhatryā* community and were initially united under the warrior-king Shivaji (1627–1680); they then served under the Brahmin Peshwas who ruled from Pune.<sup>2</sup>

Scholarship is even less concerned with Marāthā history from the late eighteenth to twentieth centuries, when individual dynasties carved out their own states (the Holkars in Indore, the Gaekwads in Baroda, the Bhonsles in Nagpur, and the Scindias in Ujjain and then Gwalior) that they initially ruled as *subedars* (vassal chiefs) under the Peshwas and then as independent Mahārājās. In their own states, the Marāthās evinced their transition from vassal marauders to kings and patronized lavish palaces, academic and religious institutions, and works of art. Despite the Marāthās' prolific artistic and philanthropic patronage, the subject of Marāthā art remains overshadowed by the vast corpus of literature on the subject of Rajput art and patronage.<sup>3</sup>

Within their lavish and eclectically designed palaces, office complexes, and *chhatrīs* (cenotaphs), Marāthā rulers commissioned extensive mural programs that reflect the cultural and artistic influence of the Rajput, Mughal, and contemporary European schools, as well as shed light on their own current political concerns. This essay examines royal Scindia murals at four locations in the former capital of Gwalior: the darbār hall of the former Saraswati Mahal (1865), now Kamla Raje Girls' College, which was the second Scindia royal residence; Bala Bai Shitole's *chhatrī* (late nineteenth/early twentieth century); the Rāg Rāgīnī room in the Motī Mahal (1875), which served as the royal office complex; and the entrance portal of the Gorkhi Mahal (early nineteenth century). Specifically, it considers the political content of the murals and the possible meanings for contemporary audiences. As will be demonstrated, in some cases these mural programs offer scenes that suggest an alternate, more nuanced reading of the Scindias' relationship with their colonial overlords, the British Raj.

Although mural fragments dateable to the early nineteenth century remain in situ in other royal Scindia structures, such as the *chhatrīs* of Mahārājās Daulat Rao (first half of nineteenth century) and Janko ji Rao (late nineteenth century), they are in such a state of disrepair that it is no longer possible to distinguish most of their content. Despite their relatively recent date of production, the murals that



form the subject of this essay appear to offer the best preserved and oldest extant examples of Scindia wall paintings. It is indeed fortunate that despite being *fresco secco* like the other Scindia murals, they are so well preserved.

All of the buildings housing these murals, except the Gorkhi Mahal, were constructed during the reign of Mahārājā Jayaji Rao Scindia (r. 1843–1886). The Gorkhi Mahal was the first Scindia palace in Gwalior and was built during the reign of Daulat Rao (r. 1794–1827). None of the murals offer dated inscriptions, and there are no extant documents regarding dates, names of the artists or patron; however, based on their style and thematic content, we may confidently ascribe a date of the early twentieth century to all of them (with the exception of those in the Gorkhi Mahal). Jayaji's son and heir, Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia I (r. 1886–1925), was most likely their patron.<sup>4</sup> Madhav Rao's ubiquitous presence in all of the mural programs—in which he is presented unequivocally as the Mahārājā of Gwalior surrounded by icons of Indic kingship—also supports his attribution as patron.

### **The Scindias, the British Raj, and the Rānī of Jhansi**

Before turning our attention to the murals themselves, it is appropriate to first briefly consider the Scindia dynasty, particularly the patrons of the buildings and murals, the Mahārājās Jayaji and Madhav Rao respectively, and finally, the events that occurred in Gwalior during the Mutiny of 1857, which informs the thematic content of many of the paintings. After Peshwa Baiji Rao I entrusted northern Malwa to Ranoji Scindia in 1739, the dynasty ruled from their capital at Ujjain until Daulat Rao shifted their seat of rule to Gwalior. The Scindias were the last in a long line of illustrious dynasties to govern the city, taking their place behind the Tomar, Parihar, and Kachhawaha Rajputs and the Mughals.

Three generations of Scindia kings were involved in wars with the British: Mahadji (r. 1761–1794) in the first Anglo-Marāthā War (1775–1782), Daulat Rao in the second (1803–1805), and Jayaji's minority saw war with the them in 1843, after which the state fostered cordial relations with the British. As one of the largest states in central India, which also bordered Jhansi, Gwalior's support was critical to the British victory during the mutiny.<sup>5</sup> Although Jayaji remained loyal to his British allies, thousands of his own troops rallied to support the Jhansi faction and assisted the rebellious Rānī Laxmi Bai in taking Gwalior, from which Jayaji was then forced to flee.<sup>6</sup> The queen, who, wearing a turban and wielding a sword in each hand, personally led her troops into battle, finally succumbed to a wound from a shell explosion and was cremated in Gwalior.<sup>7</sup> Had Jayaji himself committed to the cause and joined forces with the rānī, history may well have taken a different course. Instead, his loyalty to the crown was richly rewarded, gaining him, among other honors, the title of Knight Grand Commander of the Most Exalted

Order of the Star of India and a twenty-one-gun salute (the highest number an Indian prince could receive), a distinction he and his ancestors shared with only four other princely states.<sup>8</sup>

The late nineteenth/early twentieth century was a period of renaissance in many Indian Princely States, evinced under the enlightened rule of kings such as Ganga Singh of Bikaner, Sawai Ram Singh and Sawai Madho Singh II of Jaipur, Fateh Singh of Mewar, and Sir Pratap of Marwar. Technology, the arts, and education flourished in their states and many Indian rulers, including Mahārājā Ganga Singh and Sir Pratap, also fostered personal relations with the British Residents, viceroys, and king emperors, particularly Edward VII and George V. Madhav Rao, who at the age of ten succeeded his father after his death in 1886, was no exception to this trend. He was the first Indian ruler to institute a democratic form of government in his state, and he openly supported British rule. Madhav Rao also enjoyed close relations with King George and Queen Mary, the godparents of his two children, whom he named George Jivaji Rao and Mary Kamlaraje in their honor. When King Emperor Edward VII and George V, Prince of Wales, visited Gwalior on their royal tour of India in 1905, Madhav Rao's opulent display of hospitality was unmatched by any other Indian ruler.<sup>9</sup>

These facts present both Jayaji Rao and Madhav Rao as paradigms of colonial kingship. They were loyal and supportive in times of crisis; modern, forward thinking, and attentive to the needs of their subjects. Furthermore, not only were they welcoming and hospitable to their colonial overlords, they also were eager to forge personal relationships with them. This is how colonial writings and post-independence survey texts, such as State Gazetteers, describe the relationships between these two Scindia Mahārājās and the Raj. But, in reality, perhaps Jayaji's support of the British (whom three generations of his ancestors had fought) rather than the Rānī of Jhansi—who was not only a woman, but also a fellow Marāthā whom the majority of his troops, government officials, and public favored—dealt a blow to his pride and left anxieties that he then bequeathed to his son. Small clues that remain in Gwalior suggest that the two Mahārājās' apparent unwavering and enthusiastic support of the British Raj was only part of the story, an outward public face that they fabricated out of political exigency.

After Rānī Laxmi Bai's death and the surrender of her troops, the Scindias gained possession of the personal suits of armor she wore into battle as well as her personal cache of weapons. These items remained in the family's possession until shortly after Independence, when they were bequeathed to the Nagar Palika Corporation Museum in Gwalior. It could be argued that the Scindias regarded these objects simply as war trophies. What is more problematic, however, is a series of miniature paintings from the "Scindia School" (now in the collection of the Nagar



1

1  
Miniature painting of a battle  
between the (diacritics) Rānī of  
Jhansi and the British  
Nagār Palika Museum, Gwalior  
Scindia school  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on paper

During the late nineteenth/  
early twentieth centuries, the  
Scindia school of miniature  
painters produced several similar  
renditions of Rānī Laxmi Bai and  
her troops engaged in combat  
with the British. The battle  
scenes are inevitably depicted  
as favoring the Jhansi faction,  
with the Rānī and her troops  
delivering death blows to the  
British soldiers. Although there  
are images of defeated Jhansi  
troops, none are actually depicted  
falling at the hand of a British  
soldier.

Palika Corporation Museum) that offer scenes of pitched battles between the Jhansi and British forces (Image 1).

What is perplexing about these miniature paintings is that they all depict the battle favoring the Jhansi faction. The mounted rānī, the largest of the human figures, is always placed centrally; size hierarchy and central location are both stylistic techniques typically reserved for honored subjects in Indian painting traditions. The battles are always situated in front of the Gwalior fort, which locates this historical event in a space associated with and ruled by the Scindias. The rānī is inevitably depicted personally delivering death blows to one or more British soldiers. Similarly, although a few of her troops are shown falling at the hands of British soldiers, graphic depictions of her troops decapitating and amputating the enemy dominate the paintings. It is as if the patron wanted to project an alternate outcome to the true historical one, almost as if these miniatures give vision to his wishful thoughts.<sup>10</sup> Such images of the Rānī of Jhansi and her troops in combat with the British were to become a topos in later Scindia art, appearing in the mural programs of Madhav Rao's private spaces for politically motivated reasons that will be explored.

Perhaps, in light of the heavy British presence in Gwalior during this period,<sup>11</sup> royal artistic commissions such as these miniature paintings and murals afforded Madhav Rao safe arenas in which to quietly voice their dissatisfaction with the Raj. If the Scindia Mahārājās did actually exploit patronage of private artistic commissions as a vehicle to vent their frustrations, they would not have been the only Indian princes to do so. As Edward S. Haynes has noted, when the British Resident reduced the political and financial powers and titles of Mahārao Rājā Sheodin Singh of Alwar (1857–1874), artistic patronage became the ruler's only avenue of retaliation. Specifically, he commissioned several miniature paintings depicting Raj political agents engaged in lewd sexual acts with prostitutes and animals.<sup>12</sup>

Brief mention should also be made of the Scindia school of painting, both miniature and mural. Several scholars in Gwalior as well as members of the Scindia



nobility maintain that there was never a thriving miniature painting tradition in Gwalior State, certainly not one comparable to those of the major Rajput states. Extant examples of Scindia miniature paintings are few and are housed in the Nagar Palika Corporation and State Archaeological Museums and the Scindia family's private collections. While examples of Scindia murals in Gwalior and the earlier capitol of Ujjain are more plentiful, most are badly damaged. Those that have withstood vandals and the ravages of time in Gwalior are discussed here.

Stylistically, the surviving Scindia paintings, which range in date from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries, exhibit the influence of the late Mughal, Company, and late Rajput, (particularly Mewar and Marwar) schools. That these artistic schools should have left their imprint on the Scindia style is not surprising. The Marāthās had protracted cultural and political dealings with each of these groups, which accounts for the transference of their artistic styles. Although Scindia paintings do develop stylistically during this century-long period, the following characteristics are generally found: a cool palette; concern with depth and perspective; anonymous background figures in static, massed ranks; meticulously rendered costuming and architectural structures; and a minimal and uncluttered background. The faces of both the background and nonhistorical figures—such as those in the *rāgamālās*, one of the most popular themes of the Scindia paintings—are schematized and generic, and they are often duplicated several times in the same work. Conversely, the painters took great care in portraying the faces of historical figures, which are imbued with a photo-realistic likeness; the figures are clearly recognizable as specific individuals. Undoubtedly the painters in the royal Scindia atelier worked from photographs.

The attentive architectural detailing and physiognomic accuracy of the historical figures in the Gwalior murals is largely anomalous within the corpus of early twentieth-century north Indian paintings. Traditional Rajput and other north Indian painting schools tend to depict the figure of the king in a highly idealized manner, rather than offering a photographic likeness. While mural and miniature painting schools such as those of Mewar and Kotah produced renditions of architectural structures that are recognizable as real buildings, the artists' were seemingly unconcerned with depicting the buildings as they are viewed in life, instead offering impossible, simultaneous multiple angles. By the time the Gwalior murals were executed, representations of Indian rulers depicted in single portrait format had come into fashion among the north Indian courts. Although capturing the sitter's physical likeness, royal portraits from this era tend to be dry, lifeless, and devoid of the action and animation of earlier traditions.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the Gwalior murals offer recognizable likenesses of not only Mahārājās Jayaji and Madhav Rao in lively action scenes and narrative sequences, but also renditions of several other



2

2

Exterior of Kamla Raje Girls' College, Gwalior, the former Saraswati Mahal

Built in 1865 under Mahārājā Jayaji Rao Scindia (r. 1843–1886), the modestly sized palace replaced the earlier Gorkhi Mahal as the Scindia royal residence until the construction of Jai Vilas Palace around 1875. The darbār hall with Madhav Rao's murals is located on the upper floor.

earlier and contemporary historical figures of international renown. Figures are often set against an architectural backdrop that is lifted wholesale from Gwalior's urbane landscape and depicted in single point perspective, as if viewed faithfully from life. In short, the murals portray faces and places that would have been familiar to Gwalior's early twentieth-century visitors.

### **An Assemblage of Historical Figures at Madhav Rao's Darbār Hall**

Jayaji's modestly sized Saraswati Mahal replaced Daulat Rao's Gorkhi Mahal as the royal residence in 1865 (Image 2). Although Jayaji again shifted his residence ten years later to his final architectural commission, the sprawling Jai Vilas Palace, the Saraswati Mahal was not abandoned and remained an exclusive space where the Scindia kings held private darbārs and enjoyed musical and dance programs until Independence, when the structure was converted into a school. That the palace retained its importance to the Scindias after they relocated to Jai Vilas Palace is supported by the fact that Madhav Rao commissioned an extensive mural program in the darbār hall at the palace some thirty years after the move.

The second floor hall of the palace is approached by a staircase flanked by badly damaged murals of royal hunts, mythological scenes, and life-size images of Marāṭhā armed guards, the presence of which would have prepared visitors ascending en route to the darbār hall for entering into the exalted presence of the Scindia Mahārājā. Murals span the length of the grand hall, covering the entire wall and ceiling with scenes framed with panels of inlaid colored glass and interspersed with iconic scenes from Hindu mythology (Image 3). Panels of scrolling vegetal work break the transition zone between wall and ceiling. Had this been a reception hall in a contemporary European palace, chubby puttis entangled in the scrolling vine work would not be out of place. Instead, the Gwalior painters of Madhav Rao's darbār imbued the scene with a whimsical local twist, exchanging the Western cherubs for dreadlocked Śivite sadhus sitting cross-legged in white dhotis, doing *jappa* (counting prayers on a string of prayer beads), and framed by rings of flower garlands (Image 4).





3

3  
Interior of the darbār hall at the former Saraswati Mahal  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*) with inlay of colored glass and mirror



4

4  
Images of Śivite yogis from a continuous decorative band, upper register of wall, directly below the cornice, darbār hall, former Saraswati Mahal  
Madhav Rao Scindia  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*)

Here Western puttis are exchanged for Śivite sadhus, who are seated cross-legged, clothed in simple cotton dhotīs, with their dreadlocks tied in topknots. They are doing *jappa* (counting prayers on strings of prayer beads).

(Image 5) Upon entering the hall, the visitor is greeted by a portrait of the middle-aged Mahārājā Madhav Rao, which appears to be original and contemporaneous with the rest of the mural program, indicating that the paintings were executed during his rule (recall that he was just ten years old when his father died). (Image 6) Above the entrance, directly opposite Madhav Rao's portrait, is a bust portrait of Jayaji. Father and son face each other across this once exclusive royal space, imparting a notion of dynastic continuity. Whereas Marāthā royal portraits typically depict their subjects seated on a low dais or, less commonly, on Western-style chairs, Madhav Rao stands authoritatively, meeting the viewer's gaze.<sup>14</sup> Traditionally, only the king would sit in formal situations. He would sit on a low throne (*gaddī*) while those of lesser rank would take their seats only if and when the king gave his permission. A voluminous sky blue cape, which was worn only by holders of the Star of India, cascades over Madhav Rao's *achkan* (a long coat with a high collar) and long tight *cūṛīdār* trousers, traditional attire for formal occasions in royal north India, such as darbārs. The Star of India medal, which Queen Victoria awarded Madhav Rao's father for his loyalty during the mutiny, is prominently displayed. The slight *contrapposto* pose, in which his hand rests casually on his sword and the cape itself, along with the unconventional depiction of an Indian ruler standing, both indicate Western influence.

Official viceregal photographic portraits are the most likely source of inspiration for Madhav Rao's posture and attire in the painting. Beginning with Viceroy Victor Alexander Bruce in the late 1890s, it had become conventional for viceroys to appear in photographic portraits standing and dressed in full, sky-blue viceregal robes. The portrait of Lord Curzon from the Delhi Durbar of 1903, which was taken by the English Shimla-based studio, Bourne & Shepherd, is one of the best-known examples. Madhav Rao was not the only Indian prince to model his own portraits after those of the viceroys. For example, rulers such as Martanda Bhairava Tondaiman, rajā of the south Indian state of Pudukkottai, posed for a formal photographic portrait in a similar stance, also wearing his Star of India medal and accompanying cape.<sup>15</sup>



5

5  
Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia  
(1880–1925), darbār hall,  
former Saraswati Mahal  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century

This royal portrait exhibits Western influence in the Mahārājā's clothing, posture, and the presence of the lower portion of a pillar in the upper right. The image bears striking resemblance to portraits of various British viceroys and Napoleon Bonaparte, such as Jacques Louis David's *Napoleon in his Study* (1812). Note especially the position of Madhav Rao's right hand, which mirrors Napoleon's iconic gesture, displayed in all of his standing portraits. He wears the Marāthā-style turban and the Star of India medal that the Raj presented to his father for his loyalty during the Mutiny of 1857.



6

6  
Mural painting of Mahārājā Jayaji  
Rao Scindia, darbār hall,  
former Saraswati Mahal  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

The portraits of Jayaji and Madhav Rao face each other across the darbār hall, communicating a sense of Scindia dynastic continuity.

The Indian princes' mimicry of Raj official portraiture was not limited to the painted and photographic medium. Inspired by memorial sculptures of the highest-ranking members of the Raj, rulers such as Mahārājā Ganga Singh of Bikaner and Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia commissioned larger-than-life memorial statues of their predecessors in their respective capital cities. (Image 7) Mahārājā Jayaji Scindia's memorial statue in Jayaji Chok, Gwalior, is rooted in two Raj prototypes: viceregal memorial sculptures as exemplified by the one of Lord Curzon at the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta, in which he, like Jayaji, stands in a contraposto posture, displaying the Star of India medal and cape, and the several memorials of Victoria erected throughout India that depict the empress enthroned under carved marble canopies. Through such depictions of themselves and their predecessors, in which they are surrounded by regalia that signified their reciprocal allegiance to the crown, Indian princes publicly reaffirmed their privileged status within the empire. In commissioning portraits that were nearly identical to those who held the highest offices in the empire, perhaps Madhav Rao (and other Indian princes as well) sought to express another, more egoistic sentiment: that he was equal to his colonial overlords and not simply their pliant and dutiful royal subject.

A more careful analysis of Madhav Rao's portrait in the darbār, especially when considered with the rest of the mural program in the hall, indicates that the portrait reflects the Scindia Mahārājā's covert desire to associate himself not necessarily with the Raj, but, rather, with certain historical figures who were notorious rivals of the British. There are uncanny similarities between Madhav Rao's portrait in the Saraswati Mahal darbār hall and several portraits of Napoleon Bonaparte that would have been well known at the time, such as Jacques Louis David's *Napoleon in His Study* (1812). Both subjects hold the same pose, and Madhav Rao's Star of India echoes Napoleon's medal. The strongest evidence that Madhav's portrait was inspired by Napoleon's is the position of the former's hand, which exactly mimics Napoleon's iconic gesture of concealing his in his jacket fold. That Madhav Rao also tucks his right hand into his jacket and holds his sword with his left (while swords are traditionally held in the right hand) strongly indicates that the similarity is more than mere coincidence. It is noteworthy that other contemporary Indian princes, such as Rajā Martanda Bhairava Tondaiman, do not display this





7

Mahārājā Jayaji Rao Scindia's  
Memorial, Jayaji Chok, Gwalior  
Early twentieth century  
Marble structure, cast bronze statue

The style of the memorial, which  
was commissioned by Madhav Rao,  
is rooted in colonial memorials of  
viceroys and Queen Victoria.

gesture in their formal portraits. However, typical of such culturally hybridized portraits of Indian princes, both of the Rajā of Tondiaman's hands are exposed and display objects signifying their commitment to two realms: swords signify their martial *kṣatriyā* status, while European "gentlemanly" objects like a pair of white gloves reflect colonial influence.

Madhav Rao's personal ties with the viceroys and the British royals, along with the presence of not only a British resident, but also a steady stream of Western travelers, meant that he would certainly have been familiar with Western art. European artistic styles had in fact reached the Scindias well before Madhav Rao's reign, at the very latest, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century when Jayaji Rao, desirous of a new palace that would rival the finest European royal residences, gave the commission of Jai Vilas palace to Sir Michael Filose, an English architect of Italian descent.<sup>16</sup> Jayaji also deployed a team of Gwalior architects on a tour of Europe with the aim of exposing them to the great European palaces (which accounts for Jai Vilas's highly eclectic architectural style).

The team of keen observers would have undoubtedly also returned with works of art and souvenirs such as paintings and photographs. The fact that Madhav Rao's portrait appears to be concomitantly rooted in both the established convention of official viceregal, as well as Napoleonic, portrait traditions may have been its subject and patron's very intention. Perhaps such ambiguity was exactly Madhav's aim: to diplomatically advertise his imperial favor and/or equality to members of the highest ranks of the Raj, while concomitantly flirting dangerously with sedition. In short, if Madhav Rao had anticipated that members of the Raj might also enter his *darbār*, then the portrait would have functioned as a polysemic sign that was cleverly constructed to have multiple audience-specific meanings. To members of the Raj, the portrait would have communicated emulation of and alliance with the Scindias' colonial overlords, while to a Marāthā audience, it would have signified quite the opposite: a sympathetic association with a British antagonist.

Writing in relation to the Tondaiman rajās of Pudukkotai, Waghorne interprets elements such as the robes the British gifted to the Indian princes for their loyalty as "texts" that when carefully read against the historical context in which they were worn, provide insight into the complex relationship between the Raj and Indian elites.<sup>17</sup> Imitation is said to be the most sincere form of flattery. However, reading the "text" of Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia I's cloak and medal, in conjunction with his posture in this mural, perhaps we can conclude that here mimicry has actually been subtly subverted to quietly voice political resistance, through an adroit manipulation of the very visual vocabulary established by the colonists themselves. Drawing from Lacan, Homi Bhabha has remarked how



8

8

Mural painting of Napoleon Bonaparte, darbār hall, former Saraswati Mahal  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

This portrait is a near exact copy of *Napoleon at Arcole* (1796) by Antoine-Jean Gros.

mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized may function as a sort of cultural camouflage, employed not necessarily to flatter, but as a disguise, similar to the use of camouflage in strategic warfare.<sup>18</sup> The cultural hybridity displayed in this portrait appears to bespeak not emulation, but disaffection.

Such a reading of Mahdhv Rao Scindia's portrait may initially appear implausible, that is, if it were not for the presence of a portrait of Napoleon located on the same wall. (Image 8) To ensure the French emperor's identification, "Napoleon" is written boldly above his head in Roman script, which could have certainly been dangerous if Raj servants happened to enter the darbār hall. The image bears an uncanny resemblance to another portrait of Napoleon, Antoine-Jean Gros's *Napoleon at Arcole* (1796). Since Madhav's stance so closely mirrors that of David's Napoleon and Gros's and Madhav's portraits of Napoleon are near facsimiles, the Gwalior artists must have seen and attempted to copy the original paintings. The question then remains: What significance could Napoleon, the long-dead French emperor, have possibly held for the Indian Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia? The only tenable common thread is the British.

By the time of Madhav Rao's rule, Napoleon was Britain's greatest opponent in recent history and by the time of the murals' commission, his memory was still recent. That the British had actually defeated the French at the decisive Battle of Waterloo in 1815 would probably have been of little consequence to anyone disaffected with the Raj. The point would have been that the French, embodied by the figure of Napoleon, were the formidable opponents of the British.<sup>19</sup>

French and British rivalries were not contained to Europe—they also played out on the Indian stage. French commercial presence arrived on the Indian scene in the early seventeenth century to participate in the spice trade. By the late seventeenth century, the French and English East India Companies were the largest foreign mercantile entities vying for a commercial monopoly of trade with India. Each side became embroiled in Indian politics, backed rival factions and claimants to various thrones, and fomented local attacks on the other's trading centers. In the cases of Carnatic and Hyderabad during the mid-eighteenth century, the





9

9  
Mural paintings of historical  
figures, including Queen  
Empress Victoria and Emperor  
Bhadur Shah Zafar, darbār hall,  
former Saraswati Mahal  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

Marāthās too were drawn into the fray. Ultimately, in these two centers and elsewhere in India, British victories led to French commercial and Marāthā political isolation in India.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that the French East India Company and the Marāthās operated for the most part independently during these skirmishes, Napoleon's portrait in the darbār, functioning as a metonym for France and, by extension, its rivalry with Britain, may reflect the Scindias' deep-seated resentment toward the British for the Marāthā Empire that never was. Its presence is likely to have communicated to its contemporary audience the essence of the old adage: "my enemy's enemy is my friend."

Finally, it is also relevant to our reading of Madhav Rao's mural program that the Marāthās achieved much of their military success in Rajasthan with the aid of French soldiers of fortune, who trained the Marāthā troops in modern military tactics. The Scindias in particular owed their victories in several decisive battles to Benoit de Boigne (1751–1830), who served under Mahadji during the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>21</sup> These facts support the notion that the Scindias harbored pro-French sympathies and perhaps lasting gratitude toward the French.

While portraits of other Indian princes appear to be devoid of Napoleonic visual references, the official portraits of at least one other political figure in another part of the world incorporated Napoleonic iconography as a means of communicating both the subject's affiliation with the French emperor and the severing of ties with the colonial power. In a portrait of Simón Bolívar (1783–1730), the first president of the new, independent Latin American nation Gran Colombia, the Chilean painter Arayo Gómez depicts Bolívar on a white steed, crossing not the Alps, but the Andes. The painting is clearly modeled after David's portrait *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*.<sup>22</sup> Other portraits of the president of Gran Colombia depict him standing and displaying the iconic Napoleonic gesture of tucking one hand in this shirt. The coins of the two rulers also bear a striking resemblance. Bolívar



10

10

Portraits of Nana Phadnavis (upper right corner) and Peshwa Bajirao I (upper left corner) among other, unidentified historical figures, darbār hall, former Saraswati Mahal Late nineteenth/early twentieth century Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*)

Nana Phadnavis, whose name is inscribed above his portrait in Devanagarī script, was administrator to the Marāthās' overlords, the Peshwas of Pune. His support was critical to Mahadaji Scindia's victory over the British in the first Anglo-Marāthā War of 1775–82. The great military commander Peshwa Bajirao Bhat I was responsible for Marāthā expansion into Malwa.

was a known admirer of Napoleon; he had even attended his imperial coronation. As the Spanish colonies in the New World struggled for independence, Spain was fighting the French under Napoleon. Identifying with Napoleon, Spain's enemy, served to alienate their common enemy. We will probably never know if Madhav Rao ever saw Bolívar's portraits. Nevertheless, despite the time and space that separates their subjects, these portraits appear to be informed by the same agenda—covert sympathies with the colonizer's enemy as a subtle strategy of resistance.

Not all of the nearly thirty portraits in the former Saraswati Mahal darbār hall depict British adversaries. Some portray Indian rulers and other notables who lived and ruled long before the British became figures of consequence on the Indian political stage: Maharana Pratap and the Mughal emperors Babur, Akbar, Shah Jahan, Nur Jahan, and Shivaji, who was the architect of Marāthā power.<sup>23</sup> It would appear that Madhav Rao commissioned these portraits, his own among them, to locate himself among the “greats” of Indian history. There seems to be no logical organization in the arrangements of the portraits. For example, Maharana Pratap occupies the same panel as Babur and Nana Phadnavis, while Peshwa Bajirao I is located in proximity to Babur and Nur Jahan. A portrait of Queen Victoria provides evidence that Madhav Rao did not intend for the hall to serve exclusively as a space to visually announce his covert enmity for the British (even though the portrait is located beneath those of himself and Napoleon!) (Image 9). However, the presence of three other portraits further supports the notion that in Madhav's virtual darbār, there would have been a strong anti-Raj cabal.

Nana Phadnavis (1741–1800) appears twice in the mural program, once with his name inscribed above his head in Devanagarī script (Image 10). That inscriptions of only his and Napoleon's names accompany their portraits is a clear indication that Madhav Rao considered these two characters of the utmost importance and sought to ensure their recognition above all others. Mahadji Scindia's ally in





11

11

The upper portion of the mural cycle offers a portrait of the Rabindranath Tagore darbār hall, former Saraswati Mahal  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

An early twentieth-century Bengali writer and anti-Raj activist, Tagore had little in common with Madhav Rao, apart from the British. Also, like the Scindias, the British conferred a knighthood upon Tagore in 1915; however, Tagore relinquished the title as an act of defiance against the British.

the First Anglo-Marāthā War, Nana Phadnavis was the Peshwas' administrator and was one of the greatest obstacles to the British East India Company's expansion into the Deccan during the late eighteenth century. He doggedly resisted British alliances and was one of the strongest opponents of Lord Wellesley's policy of Subsidiary Alliance, which aimed to reduce all of India into a military dependence on the East Indian Company.<sup>24</sup> Nana Phadnavis is honored in this royal Scindia mural program as a fellow Marāthā who assisted in military campaigns, possibly as one with whom the Scindias shared a common enemy, and as someone who was similarly agonistic to British imperial expansion.

(See Image 9) Another portrait of a British rival in the darbār hall is of the last Mughal emperor, Bhadur Shah Zafar II (r. 1775–1862), who gave his sanction to the rebellious sepoys during the mutiny. In so doing, he made himself an enemy of the British, who responded by exiling him to Burma as one of their first decisive acts in the transformation from the mercantile East India Company to the imperialistic Raj.

(Image 11) While the presence of all these notable Indian and international rulers in the darbār appears to indicate Madhav Rao's desire to locate himself among these illustrious leaders, it could not have been his sole aim. This is evidenced by the fact that not all of the portraits depict rulers. A portrait of the politically minded Bengali writer, Rabindranath Tagore, who was an outspoken advocate of Indian nationalism and an anti-Raj activist, is one of the largest and most prominently situated in the darbār.

What purpose could the Bengali writer's portrait have served in Madhav's darbār, if not to express that the mahārājā shared a similar anti-Raj ideology? Again, the only common thread between subject and patron is the British. Tagore's presence in the mural program indicates Madhav Rao's desire to associate himself not only with key historical figures, but also specifically with those who opposed Mughal or British imperial rule. The conglomeration of diverse nationalist fig-



12

12

Chhatrī commemorating Bala Bai Shitole, Gwalior  
Mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century  
Stone, plaster, mineral pigment (internal)  
Height from the ground to the top of the *śikara* (tower): approximately 50 feet.

Along with other Marāṭhā dynasties, the Scindias adopted the Rajput practice of constructing chhatrīs (cenotaphs) to commemorate members of royalty. The Marāṭhā chhatrī tradition generally surpasses that of the Rajput in the scale of the structures, use of luxury materials, elaborate decorative programs, and daily rituals that are still conducted at the chhatrīs to this day. The Scindia chhatrīs exhibit the same architectural form as their royal temples in Gwalior and their former capital of Ujjain.

ures from India's past and Madhav Rao's present are assembled in a manner that defies time and space to create a virtual, anti-imperialist cabal. One cannot help but wonder: Had Madhav Rao lived to see the development of Gandhi's political career and the *svārāj* movement, would Gandhi's portrait also have been included in the mural program?

### Bala Bai Shitole's Chhatrī

When the Scindias settled in Gwalior, one of the practices they adopted from their Rajput neighbors was the construction of chhatrīs to commemorate their ancestors at the sites of their cremation.<sup>25</sup> Like their Rajput counterparts, the Scindia kings often exploited the chhatrī tradition to benefit themselves politically, using the architectural forms and decorative programs to express their power, authority, and legitimacy. Once settled in their new states, the Marāṭhās sought to establish the spaces as their own, and one of the ways in which they did so was through the patronage of chhatrīs that surpass many of Rajput tradition in size, the use of luxury materials, decorative programs, and daily services of worship that are still conducted at the sites today.

Mahadji's only daughter Bala Bai (d. 1833) married into the Shitole family, the Scindias' highest-ranking *jāgīrdārs* (landed nobility) and outlived her husband, Lardoji (d. 1792), and brother, Daulat Rao Scindia. At the time of Daulat Rao's death, his only son Janko ji Rao II (r. 1827–43) was a minor, so Bala Bai was appointed regent of Gwalior State.<sup>26</sup> Although Bala Bai died during Janko ji's reign, and he was likely the initial patron of the chhatrī, the thematic content of the murals indicates that the cenotaph was completed under Madhav Rao's aegis.

(Image 12) Like most royal Scindia chhatrīs, the architectural form of Bala Bai's is borrowed from the Scindia temples in Gwalior and their former capital of Ujjain. It is located in a private walled garden, next to her son's chhatrī in the former exclusive Shitole *śmaśān* (cremation ground). Befitting the decorative program of





13

Mural fragment of *rās līla* (Krishna dancing with Radha before a group of *gopis*) before the Scindia Palace, Jai Vilas, in Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī Late nineteenth/early twentieth century

Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

Like royal Rajput artistic patrons, the Scindias commissioned paintings with scenes from the Hindu myths that are located in their own urbanscape. Here, Krishna and Radha dance against the backdrop of the Scindia royal palace, Jai Vilas, while Durga slays the Buffalo Demon (*Mahiṣamārdinī*) on the right.



14

Mural fragment of a Marāthā royal (possibly Madhav Rao Scindia) seated with Marāthā noble women before Scindia-style architecture in Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī Late nineteenth/early twentieth century

Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

The seated Marāthā male appears to be a portrait of Madhav Rao Scindia.

a funerary memorial, and unlike the paintings in the darbār hall at the Saraswati Mahal, the frescos in Bala Bai's chhatrī are not strictly politically themed. As in most chhatrīs, they offer scenes from Hindu mythology, *rāgāmālās* (personified musical modes rendered in accordance with a precise iconographic code), images of yogis, royal hunts, and battle scenes.

In addition to adopting the chhatrī tradition, the Scindias were inspired by the Rajput practice of locating iconic scenes from Hindu mythology in their own kingdoms, against the recognizable backdrop of their own architectural commissions. (Image 13) Bala Bai's chhatrī offers renditions of the *Rās Līla* and Durga *Mahiṣamārdinī* before the Jai Vilas Palace, while Ravana's palace complex, in a rendition of the Siege of Lanka is also constructed in the Scindias' distinctive eclectic European composite architectural style. Similarly, Scindia nobles populate secular scenes of royal pastimes, including hunting, drinking, female dancers and musicians, and the celebration of Teej, the festival that welcomes the monsoon—all of which are familiar to the Rajput chhatrī tradition. Males wear the distinctive Marāthā-style turban, and female figures wear the nine-yard Marāthā sari.

Madhav Rao himself appears in several of the scenes. (Image 14) One shows him in animated discourse with Marāthā noble women in what appears to be his *zenānā*. (Image 15) Another depicts him leading his troops into battle, surrounded by icons of Indic kingship; he rides an elephant and is the only figure in the scene sheltered by an umbrella, as an attendant fans him with a fly whisk. Madhav Rao's face is the most detailed in the composition, which, coupled with the icons of royalty surrounding his person, make him instantly recognizable and convey his status.

(Image 16) While the other images are ahistorical—either drawn from myth or generalized scenes of royalty—an image of the Rānī of Jhansi and her troops engaged in combat with British soldiers offers the only subject in the chhatrī taken from contemporary history. The scene offers less carnage than most of the Scindia miniature paintings of the subject, but it is significant that of the only two soldiers actually engaged in hand-to-hand combat, the Jhansi soldier is clearly the victor; he kneels over the fallen British soldier, slitting his throat. Furthermore, it can hardly be coincidental that the battle scene, located directly under a tableau of the





15



16 DETAIL



16

15

Mural fragment of Scindia battle procession with Mahārājā Madhav Rao leading on the royal state elephant in Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*)

Although this mural fragment is now badly damaged, the photographic likeness of Madhav Rao's face (beneath the parasol) still confirms his identity. The Mahārājā's status is reiterated through the icons of kingship (elephant, ornamented howdah, umbrella, and fly whisk) that surround his person.

16

Mural fragment of the Siege of Lanka and Rani Laxmi Bai in Battle with British soldiers in Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*)

This mural is similar in composition and style to the Scindia miniature paintings of the same subject.

Siege of Lanka, mirrors the organization of the “good guys” versus the “bad guys”; both Ravana's troops and the British forces are located to the viewer's left (the less auspicious side in pan-Indic religious traditions), and both the Jhansi faction and Hanuman with his monkey army are situated to the viewer's (more auspicious) right side.

Several facts—the battle scene is between the Rānī of Jhansi and the British; the Jai Vilas has a construction date of 1875; Madhav Rao is depicted as a middle-aged adult; and images of his son are absent—certify that the patron of these murals can only be Madhav Rao.<sup>27</sup> Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī is located in its own compound, which was built expressly for it and is separate from the two royal Scindia *chhatrī bhags* (necropolises). It is therefore unlikely that the British resident or other Western visitors would have visited that site.<sup>28</sup> Thus, like the Saraswati Mahal darbār hall, the chhatrī was a private Scindia space. The chhatrī's walls afforded its patron the freedom to commission murals that appear to reflect his true political sentiments. They represent him as the legitimate heir to the throne, against the backdrop of his father's architectural commissions and interspersed with politically charged iconic images that the colonial overlords would undoubtedly have regarded as seditious.

### The Rāg Rāgīnī Hall at the Motī Mahal

Jayaji's Motī Mahal, adjacent to the Jai Vilas palace, is a sprawling office complex that served as the administrative nucleus of his state. It housed the offices involved in implementing the modernization reforms for Gwalior that he begun during his





17

17  
Mural fragment of *rāgāmālā* paintings, Mahārājā's office, Moti Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*); restored

As in several of the *rāgāmālā* paintings in the Moti Mahal office, the male protagonist is a youthful Madhav Rao Scindia. This *raginī* painting has an identical iconography (seated male, who is clearly noble, among three seated women and attended by a female fly whisk bearer) to the mural fragment in image 12. Since the image in the Moti Mahal is labeled and numbered "*raginī dhmakshi sri*," the one in Bala Bai's chhatrī must also depict the same personified musical mode.

18

Jayaji Rao Scindia in the Moti Mahal darbār hall with his officials and the nobles of Gwalior state watching a dance performance, Mahārājā's office, Moti Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco secco*); restored

The faces and costumes of each figure are depicted with a high degree of realism and detail, indicating that the artists drew them from life and that each is probably a portrait. The fourth figure from the bottom of the scene, in the first row and to Jayaji's right, appears to be a foreigner, possibly the British Resident.



18

rule, and that were brought to fruition during his son Madhav Rao's tenure. More than functioning purely as the state's bureaucratic hub, the Scindia mahārājās also hosted musical and dance performances in the darbār hall and in the sprawling landscaped "Italian Garden" before the main entrance.

The mahārājā's private office was located in a modestly sized room on the second floor, which is covered in floor to ceiling murals. Whereas we can reasonably assume that the Saraswati Mahal darbār hall and Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī were the Scindias' private spaces, whose walls would have been viewed by an approved audience, a more diverse audience would have viewed the mahārājā's office. The Resident and other Raj servants would have been among those diverse visitors to whom it would have been inappropriate to display images that hinted at disaffection with the empire. Accordingly, the murals are silent on the subject of empire, and focus instead on presenting the Scindias, specifically their patron Madhav Rao, as ideal kings and reinforcing their position as the rightful rulers of Gwalior.

The room is comprised of two sections divided by an arched screen. The dados in both sections offer *rāgāmālā* paintings—lending the room its contemporary name—each of which is numbered and labeled in Devanagari script.<sup>29</sup> As at Bala Bai's chhatrī, the architectural backdrops of the *rāgāmālā* scenes, although not identifiable as specific structures, are clearly of the style Jayaji patronized. Also, as at Bala Bai's chhatrī, the characters are recognizably Marāṭhā, with one recurring male figure that resembles Madhav Rao, although as appropriate to a *rāgāmālā* *nayak* (hero/protagonist), the figure is younger and slimmer than other portraits of Madhav Rao (Image 17).

The upper portions of the walls in each of the two sections of the office are filled with continuous bands of murals. The panel next to the entrance offers an image of Mahārājā Jayaji Rao seated on his cushioned gaddi among an assembly of his nobles and administrators, at a dance performance in what is identifiable as the Moti Mahal darbār hall on the ground floor below the office (Image 18). The orthogonal lines of the painting lead to the figure of the mahārājā, making him the focal point of the scene. He is attended by a fly whisk bearer and flanked by seated nobles (identifiable by their swords) on his right and high-ranking administra-





19

19

Jayaji Rao Scindia hunting,  
Mahārājā's office, Moti Mahal,  
Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*); restored

Although lacking Jayaji's  
characteristic "mutton chop"  
sideburns, the figure with the  
Shivite tilak, dark complexion,  
and portly figure can be identified  
through these traits as Jayaji Rao.  
Mural and miniature paintings  
depicting the king victorious in  
the hunt have a long history in  
Indian art and convey notions of  
ideal kingship, including physical  
prowess, force of arms, and ability  
to protect his subjects.



19 DETAIL

tors on his left, in accordance with formal Scindia *darbār* organization. Seated in the front row of the noblemen section, although not in honored proximity to the mahārājā, is a uniformed European figure, who was likely to have been the state's British Resident.

The *darbār* panel unfolds into an elaborate hunting scene that confronts the visitor immediately upon entering (Image 19). In the center of the panel, Jayaji, accompanied by noblemen and followed by a retinue of armed mounted soldiers, is depicted cocking his rifle from his howdah, having just mortally wounded a tiger to the viewer's right.<sup>30</sup> Although images of the king engaging in a successful hunt had for centuries been one of the most popular subjects of Indian royal portraiture, painted hunting scenes had fallen out of fashion in other Indian courts by the time this mural was executed. Photographs replaced them in popularity; taken directly after the hunt they feature the rulers, often with their foreign guests, surrounded by the carcasses of their prey piled neatly before them. In the pre-modern period hunting was a royal prerogative, and the king's success in the expedition was a well-established metaphor for his wealth, physical prowess, and his ability to govern his state and defend his subjects.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the conspicuous presence of the king's troops communicated that he was well supported and guarded. The Rāg Rāginī Hall hunting panel would therefore have conveyed an appropriate message to Madhav Rao's pluralistic audience of Marāṭhā administrators and Raj officials. As the subject of the scene is Jayaji engaged in a successful hunt, Madhav Rao certainly commissioned it to communicate his descent, and by extension legitimacy from a capable Mahārājā.

The upper portion of the wall in the next section of the office features a continuous mural band depicting a Daśera procession in Gwalior, which is identifiable through the careful rendition of several of the city's key monuments. In many of the former princely states, the annual ten-day festival of Daśera culminated with a royal procession, in which an image of the royal *kul devī* (patron goddess) was carried through the capital city. The king and the *rāj kumār* (heir apparent) followed the goddess, symbolically in attendance to her, and a retinue of armed troops, members of the high-ranking nobility, and empty vehicles accompanied the procession. Daśera processions were lavish court-sponsored events, in which



20

20

Mahārājā Jayaji Rao and Rāj kumār  
Mahdadhv Rao Scindia leading  
a group of nobles in a Daśera  
procession before Jai Vilas palace,  
Motī Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on plaster (*fresco  
secco*); restored

Their large elephants, richly  
ornamented howdahs, ranks of  
attendants, umbrellas, and fly  
whisks, all identify the king and  
heir apparent as the most exalted  
figures in the crowd. The procession  
is shown leaving Jai Vilas Palace,  
which Jayaji commissioned. In the  
background is the Gwalior Fort, a  
reference to Gwalior's past, its rule  
by other prominent dynasties, and,  
by extension, the Scindia's territorial  
claim to the fort. State-sponsored  
Daśera processions were held in  
Gwalior until 1964. To the left, a  
group of Europeans are shown in a  
less ornate, un-canopied howdah.

the kings announced to their public their devotion to the kul devī and, by extension, her benediction of their rule. The events are a common visual trope of the mural programs in darbārs and other semi-public areas at Indian palaces. Other well-known examples, contemporaneous to that in the Motī Mahal, include one in the Mysore Palace that was completed in 1945 and depicts the Daśera Festival of 1930, and another at Umaid Bhavan Palace, Jodhpur, which was completed in 1944. Both display a photorealistic style that is similar to the mural program at the Rāg Raginī Hall. Like royal hunting expeditions, the Daśera procession offered Indian kings the opportunity to publicly display their wealth and force of arms, which was represented through the conspicuous presence of armed troops and cannons. Mahārājā Madhav Rao's wall paintings of the subject allowed him to immortalize this occasion and visually announce to his visitors that he and his father participated in this performative kingship ritual.

(Image 20) In the Rāg Raginī mural, the royal procession begins with Jayaji and a young Madhav Rao ensconced in separate howdahs on their respective richly caparisoned elephants; departing from Jai Vilas Palace, they are surrounded by a retinue of foot soldiers, mounted attendants, and noblemen. Surmounting a rocky escarpment, Gwalior Fort appears in the distance, behind Jai Vilas palace. Its presence in this scene of piety and political authority alludes to the illustrious past of the city and the rulers' ownership of it. Similar to Madhav Rao's portrait in Bala Bai's chhatrī, only he and Jayaji are crowned by umbrellas and preceded by fly whisk bearers on their royal mounts, conveying their exalted status in relation to the other characters in the dense tangle of figures. A small group of foreigners, one of whom is probably the Resident, follows the Mahārājā's and raj kumār's elephants. The foreigners are also seated on elephants, although theirs are smaller and their howdahs are un-canopied, conveying their comparatively lower social status in the galaxy of the Scindia court.

The fact that the British and noblemen's costumes and faces are rendered in such detail indicates that these are portraits. If this is true, it would be logical to conclude that the mural depicts a specific historical Daśera procession, similar to the Daśera mural at the Mysore City Palace of the annual festival in 1930, rather



21

Ranks of Gwalior state troops surrounding empty vehicles, Motī Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*); restored

In the Daśera processions of other Indian princely states, the image of the royal family's patron goddess (ensconced in a carriage or palanquin) leads, followed by mounted troops, foot soldiers, members of the royal family, and nobility. Gwalior is unusual in that the royal procession visits the goddess in her state temple, rather than carrying her image throughout the capital. Images of empty vehicles are a common feature in the Daśera and other state-sponsored celebrations. Accordingly, they are prominently displayed in scenes of such events in courtly paintings.

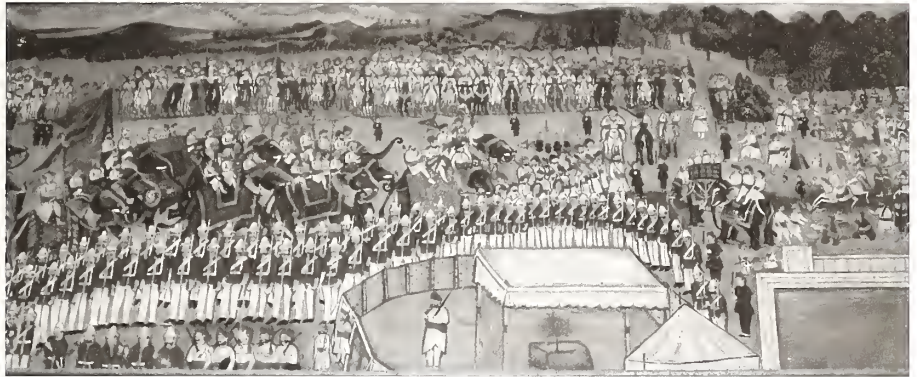
22

The Daśera procession arrives at the semi tree before the temple of the royal family's patron goddess, Motī Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*); restored

The Scindia Mahārājā would stop at this semi tree before entering the royal temple. He would distribute its golden leaves to members of the nobility, as a token of his support. Today in Gwalior, members of all classes of society distribute the semi leaves to each other on Daśera, in imitation of this royal practice.



21



22

than a generalized rendition of the occasion. However, the presence of Jayaji and Madhav Rao as a child as well as the inclusion of buildings that Madhav Rao patronized long after his father's death invalidates this hypothesis. Rather, the mural program must depict a generalized Scindia Daśera procession, conflating how they must have been staged under the rules of these two mahārājās. The rendition of young Madhav Rao next to his father in the procession was doubtlessly inspired by actual events: the heir apparent would certainly have accompanied his father in this important state event. Unequivocally rendering both as rulers of course imparts the notion of dynastic continuity and reinforces the former's legitimacy.

(Image 21) The departure from the Jai Vilas panel unfolds into a scene offering ranks of Marāthā mounted and armed cavalymen who guard the king and prince and surround the empty palanquins that precede the royal elephants. Unique to royal Indian Daśera processions, in the Scindia tradition, the image of the kul devī is not actually carried through the capital. Rather, the royal parade makes its way to the goddess at her state temple, the Maṇdre kī Mātā Mandir. (Image 22) The procession stops first at the level field in front of the temple, before a semi tree. The *rāj purohit* (royal priest) then leads the mahārājā through a ritual (*semi pūjan*), and the king symbolically touches the leaves of the tree with his sword and distributes them amongst his nobles. The leaves of the semi tree are golden at the time of the autumn Daśera, and the ruler's distribution of them is likely reminiscent of an earlier practice in which he gifted gold coins to the nobility on auspicious occasions, a gesture that conveyed their reciprocal support. At the lower right of the panel, the semi tree is shown under a white canopy in an

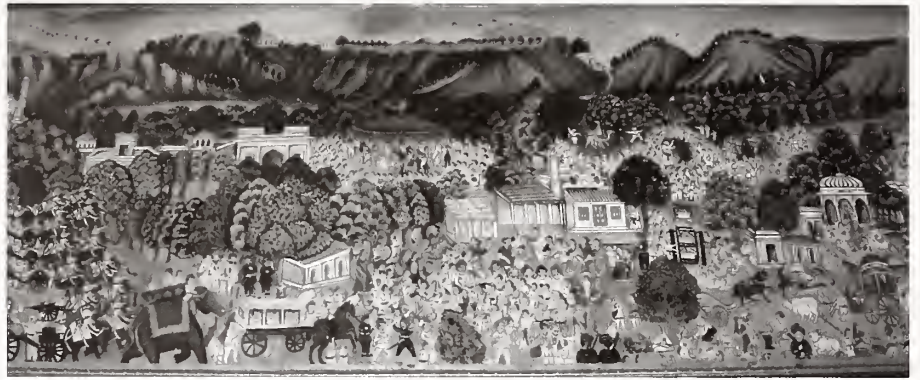


23

23

Mandre ki Mātā Mandir, Gwalior  
Moti Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*); restored

The Mandre ki Mātā Mandir  
houses the principle image of  
the Scindias' *kul devī* (patron  
goddess). Cannons are discharged  
on the surrounding hills,  
heralding the arrival of the  
procession, and people are seated  
around the temple, probably  
singing bhajans (religious songs).



24

24

Gwalior celebrates Daśera,  
Moti Mahal, Gwalior  
Late nineteenth/early twentieth  
century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*); restored

The Moti Masjid, which Madhav  
Rao commissioned, appears in the  
upper left, and the Theosophical  
Lodge, also his commission, is to  
the left of the merry-go-round.  
Gwalior's joyous citizens, who  
are celebrating the auspicious  
occasion, people this urbane scene.

enclosure, encircled by ranks of Marāthā and British soldiers, musicians, singers, dancers, acrobats, and royal standard and flag bearers who await the arrival of the king and prince.

(Image 23) The next stop on the processional route, the hilltop temple Mandre ki Mātā, dominates the following panel. The temple is flanked by two hills, which are crowned with troops firing cannons. Plumes of smoke curl from the mouths of the cannons as they are discharged for the auspicious occasion.

(Image 24) The final panel depicts the processional route back to Jai Vilas Palace from the temple, with careful renditions of the Italian Garden before the Moti Mahal, the Moti Masjid, the Theosophical Lodge, and the Govind Mandir, all of which are Madhav Rao's architectural commissions. The only structure contemporaneous to Madhav Rao's rule, which the procession would have passed but has been omitted, is the Moti Mahal itself. The administrative center of the state, Madhav Rao would certainly not have wished to overlook it in this politically charged visual rendition of Scindia power. Perhaps it is not actually omitted; the artists may have taken for granted the location of the audience within the structure itself. Therefore, including the Moti Mahal in the mural would have been superfluous. The ebullient residents of Gwalior are interspersed in the architectural structures; they ride in carriages or carousels, dance, and chat. Groups of women are also gathered before temples singing, all of which convey an air of merriment and celebration befitting Daśera. The presence of these sites of worship and jovial human figures not only irrefutably locates the event in Gwalior, but it also highlights Madhav Rao's philanthropic and religiously pluralistic building programs, again portraying him as the ideal ruler of contented subjects.





25 DETAIL

25

King in howdah in Daśera procession, Gorki Mahal, Gwalior  
Mid-/late nineteenth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

The portly physique and dark complexion of the king makes Jayaji Rao a likely candidate for the young Jayaji Rao is the likely candidate for the figure, who is ensconced in a howdah on the largest elephant to the right.

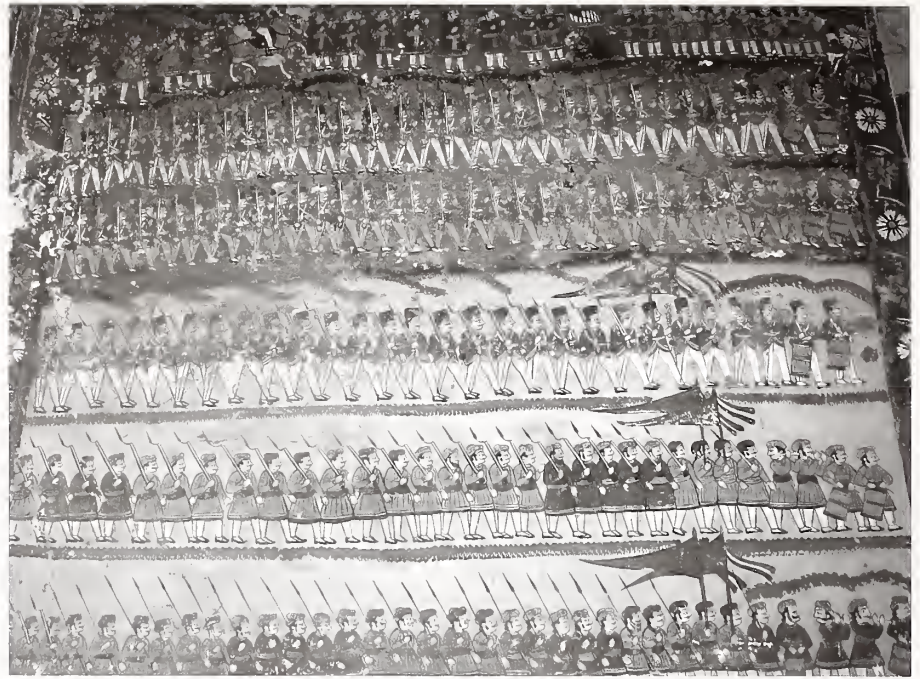


25

(Image 25) Madhav Rao's Daśera procession in the Motī Mahal may be compared to an earlier Scindia Daśera mural program located in the entrance portal of Daulat Rao's Gorki Mahal, now Padma Raje's Girls School. Iconographic analysis indicates that the mahārājā in the procession is Jayaji, although younger, slimmer, and without the distinctive side whiskers of his later portraits. Madhav Rao is absent from the procession. As the heir apparent, he was a key figure on the Daśera procession, and thus we can conclude that Jayaji Rao commissioned the mural before his son's birth. Stylistically, the major difference between Jayaji and Madhav Rao's murals is the former's lack of naturalism. Figures are highly stylized, there is an absence of depth and recession, and the ranks of Marāthā and British soldiers are divided into strips, stacked one on top of the next (Image 26). The procession is not clearly located in Gwalior. In fact, the scenes are not only devoid of any recognizable landmarks, but also of any architectural structures at all, locating it in a timeless, featureless landscape.

### Conclusion

Mahārājā Madhav Rao Scindia I artfully crafted and announced the Scindias' power to two disparate audiences in early twentieth-century colonial India: the Raj and his fellow Marāthās. His father Jayaji Rao Scindia was not only one of the most politically influential Indian rulers, but also a prolific architectural patron. One of the ways Madhav Rao expressed his authority and political ideology was through a series of mural programs in his father's architectural commissions. In the murals he patronized for private Scindia spaces, Madhav Rao had free reign in his choice of subject matter, and the thematic content of the murals suggests an alternate reading to the British-authored history of their relations with House of Scindia. I suggest that components in the mural programs in Padma Raje's Girls' School and Bala Bai Shitole's chhatrī were informed by Madhav Rao's frustration, powerlessness, and possibly his quiet desire that key historical events had taken a



26

26

Ranks of British and Marāthā soldiers in Daśera procession, Gorki Mahal, Gwalior  
Mid-/late nineteenth century  
Mineral pigment on plaster  
(*fresco secco*)

Unlike Madhav Rao's Daśera procession mural in the Moti Mahal, this mural displays markedly less naturalism and detail.

different outcome. Although such a reading belies what colonial and post-colonial sources inform us about Scindia/Anglo relations, the content of the murals themselves is undeniable. In particular, with their profuse renditions of characters that were antagonistic to the Raj, it would indeed appear that the "writing" is on the wall, so to speak. The House of Scindia did not consider itself, nor did it wish to promote itself to fellow Marāthās as deferential colonial subjects.

In his choice of subject matter for the murals at the royal office in the Moti Mahal, Madhav Rao undoubtedly anticipated a more public audience, and so he naturally had to be more cautious with its thematic content. Accordingly, they are devoid of any images that could be construed as seditious, and focus instead on glorifying the dynasty, Jayaji, and Madhav Rao in particular. Perhaps when and if the Scindia royal family opens their private archives to researchers, it will shed more light on the subject of their ancestors' true feelings about their colonial overlords and the meaning and function of these murals.

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## NOTES

The information for this article was obtained while conducting doctoral research on chhatris in Rajasthan and central India in 2006–2007. This research was supported by a junior fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies, for which I wish to express my gratitude.

1. As this is an article concerning Marāthā art, this historical bias should be briefly addressed. Scholarship's unquestioning acceptance of the Marāthās as rapacious, predatory "outsiders," or "foreigners," in Rajasthan, who are held accountable for the dissolute state of the region's economic, agricultural, and administrative systems in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century (the period immediately prior to the British East India Company's treaty with the Rajputs and Marāthās, which occurred at the conclusion of the Third Anglo-Marāthā War of 1818) can be traced to Cornel James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast'han*, first published in 1829. The work was seminal to colonial understandings of Rajasthan's history and culture and continues to be both a vital reference for different academic discourses dealing with various Rajasthani subjects as well as the subject of post-colonial critique in its own right. Tod's damning accounts of the Marāthā incursions into Rajasthan continue to be uncritically endorsed in writings on Rajasthan's history, perpetuating the negative reputation he assigned to the Marāthās. Norbert Peabody calls attention to a fundamental bias that colors Tod's writing and posits that the Marāthā/Rajput relations were more complicated than he would have us believe. Norbert Peabody, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King: Karmic Kin(g)ship in Kotah," in *Gods Kings and Tigers: The Art of Kotah*, ed. Stuart Carey Welch (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1997), 76. Significantly, the Marāthās had been the primary indigenous rivals of the British East Indian Company and a major impediment in their commercial and political expansion. As the first British political agent in Rajasthan, Tod's vilification of the Marāthās therefore offers a convenient paternalistic rationalization for British overlordship of the Rajput states—to protect them from the predatory Marāthās.
2. Having advanced from the Deccan, the Marāthās first conquered the *subah* (territory) of Malwa (Central India) from the Mughals for Peshwa Bajirao I in 1727; he then divided the region into to sections, Ranoji Scindia (north) and Malhar Rao Holkar (south) in 1739. According to Marāthā administrative practice, they levied heavy taxes—the infamous *chauth* on the territory—which in part accounts for their unpopularity in the region. From Malwa, the Marāthās fanned out, conquering and then imposing the *chauth* in Rajasthan and Bundelkhand, advancing as far north as Delhi. See V. S. Krishnan, *Madhya Pradesh District Gazetteers: Gwalior* (Bhopal: Government Central Press, 1965), 28.
3. In 1981, *Marg*, the journal of Indian art history, dedicated an entire volume to Marāthā art and architecture. See "The Art of the Chhatrapatis and Peshwas," *Marg* 34, no. 2 (1981). The work remains one of the few endeavors on this subject; however, it is restricted to Marāthā commissions in Maharashtra, therefore excluding Scindia, Holkar, and Gaikwar commissions.
4. One of the greatest challenges in conducting research on any subject relating to Scindia history is that the



- majority of primary sources are housed in the Scindia private archives, which are not accessible to researchers. I am therefore greatly indebted to Dr. Ramakanta Chaturvedi, former curator of the Nāgar Palika Corporation Museum, Gwalior, for providing information on these buildings.
5. In 1856, the British refused to acknowledge the Marāthā queen regent, Rani Laxmi Bai (1828–1858), and her late husband's adopted son as the successors to the throne of the princely state of Jhansi. Under the British Doctrine of Lapse, the state and its revenue would then have reverted to the Crown. After exhausting all legal avenues, the Rāṇī led the state army, joined by scores of local volunteers, into rebellion against the British, which coincided with the Mutiny of 1857. Although she fell in battle, Rāṇī Laxmi Bai became (and remains) a national hero and iconic figure of resistance against the British.
  6. S. N. Roy, *Gwalior*, vol. 1, *A History of the Native States of India* (Calcutta: Thaker Spink and Co., 1888), 360–361.
  7. V. S. Krishnan, *Madhya Pradesh District Gazetteers: Gwalior* (Bhopal: Government Central Press, 1965), 38. In Gwalior, an equestrian statue commemorates Rāṇī Laxmi Bai, at the site of her cremation.
  8. Roy, *Gwalior*, 46.
  9. Charles Allen and Shrada Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes* (London: Century Publishing, 1984), 103–104.
  10. According to Chaturvedi, although these miniature paintings are undated, they were most certainly patronized by either Jayaji or Madhav Rao. Given their subject matter—the Rāṇī's last stand against the British, during which she lost her life—these paintings cannot pre-date 1857, and their style was not favored by Madhav Rao's son and successor, George Jiwaji Rao (r. 1925–1961). This offers a fairly precise window of time in which the paintings were likely to have been produced. Chaturvedi also maintains that it is equally certain that they were commissioned specifically by a Scindia royal. He is unfamiliar with a tradition of miniature painting patronage among the Scindia nobility. We may also attribute these miniature paintings to either Jayaji or Madhav Rao's patronage on stylistic grounds: they share a similar execution of human figures and color palette as well as thematic content with a mural section in Bala Bai's chhatrī, which as will be discussed, was likely to have been commissioned by Madhav Rao. Finally, and this is perhaps the most convincing piece of evidence for a royal Scindia patron, the majority of the miniature paintings in the Nāgar Palika Museum, including those of Rāṇī Laxmi Bai, offer the inscription of "Scindia" on their reverse. This strongly suggests that such paintings were commissioned either by or for a Scindia, or at the very least, were gifted to them at a later date and were regarded so highly as to be inscribed, kept, and later gifted to the museum.
  11. In addition to visits by British royals and viceroys, after 1818, it became Raj colonial policy to install a Resident in the capital of each princely state. The Resident would attend all formal state functions, including darbār meetings.
  12. Edward S. Haynes, "Patronage for the Arts and the Rise of the Alwar State," in *The Idea of Rajasthan Explorations in Regional Identity*, ed. Karine Schomer, Joan L. Erdman, Deryck Lodrick, Lloyd I. Rudolph (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 278–79.
  13. Vishakha N. Desai, "Timeless Symbols: Royal Portraits from Rajasthan 17TH–19TH Centuries," in Schomer, Erdman, Lodrick, and Rudolph, *Idea of Rajasthan Explorations*, 1994.
  14. The Holkar and Scindia royals and their nobles are typically depicted in late- nineteenth-/early twentieth-century photographs seated comfortably on a low-cushioned dais, with one leg raised, on which they support an extended arm. Life-sized marble sculptures in the round of deceased Marāthā royals in their chhatrīs also exhibit this pose.
  15. This image of Rājā Martanda Bhairave Tondaiman wearing the Star of India medal and associated blue cape is offered by an official memo conveying the king's demise and is reproduced in Joanne Punzo Waghorne, *The Raja's Magic Clothes* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 2.
  16. Allen and Dwivedi, *Lives of the Indian Princes*, 214.
  17. Waghorne, *Raja's Magic Clothes*, 5.
  18. *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 128–29.
  19. During the nineteenth century, provoked by anxieties that the French would foment revolution in England and by the recent Napoleonic wars, the British disparagingly likened certain rival Indian communities to the French (often specifically to Napoleon) referring to the Marāthās as "the Frenchmen of Asia." See, among others: Norbert Peabody, "Tod's Rajast'han and the Boundaries of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth Century India," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1996): 203. Although such an appellation would probably not have been used against Madhav Rao specifically, an "ally" of the Raj, given his worldliness, it is unlikely that he would have been unaware of the castigating tag. The

- Napoleonic reference in Madhav Rao's portrait may thus have been a sardonic retort to this.
20. Barbara N. Ramusack, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 59–63.
  21. For an account of De Boigne's military career, see S. J. Owen, "Benoît De Boigne," *The English Historical Review* 3, no. 9 (1888).
  22. Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 12.
  23. Maharana Pratap was an iconic figure associated with Mewar's proud resistance to Muslim incursions in his kingdom and was "resurrected" centuries later by Indian nationalists to rally freedom fighters against the Raj. Lindsey Harlan, *The Goddesses' Henchmen: Gender in Indian Hero Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 46. Thus, Maharana Pratap's appearance in the darbar may have been politically informed and hinted at its patron's desire to associate with the freedom fighter.
  24. Stuart Gordon, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Marathas 1600–1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 269–73.
  25. Literally meaning "umbrella" in several North Indian languages, owing to their typically open, pillared, and domed forms, chhatris are crematory memorials that mark the location where the *antim sanskār* (Hindu funerary rites) of members of the North Indian ruling elites and certain religious figures were performed. The architectural form of the memorials and the semantic content of their names are significant, as umbrellas are signifiers of religious and temporal authority in Indian art.
  - Rajput rulers began the practice of memorializing their predecessors through chhatris after contact with the Indo-Islamic tomb tradition. It is impossible to determine a precise era, but I do not know of any examples that pre-date the early fifteenth century. Given their extended military campaigns throughout Rajasthan and their cultural ties with many of the Rajput courts (see Peabody, "The King is Dead") the Scindias would have been well acquainted with Rajput art, architecture, and the visual vocabulary of north Indian kingship. They are among several Marāthā dynasties that adopted the chhatri tradition.
  26. C. S. Bayley, *Representative Men of Central India* (Bombay: C. B. Burrows, 1902), 27–28
  27. Tākur Krishna Rao Maloji Rao Shitole, a historian based in Pune and an ancestor of Bala Bai Shitole, supports this hypothesis. Unpublished documents in the family's possession indicate that the chhatri's construction was indeed patronized by the Scindia royal house, although they do not state specifically under which Mahārājā it was completed.
  28. Although the other royal Scindia chhatris in Gwalior and their nearby summer capital of Shivpuri are mentioned in state gazetteers and travel guides from the early twentieth century onwards (see, among others: M. B. Garde, *A Handbook of Gwalior* (Gwalior: Alija Darbar Press, 1936), C. E. Luard, *Gwalior State Gazetteer*, vol. 1, part 4 (Bombay: Caxton Works Fort, 1908), textual sources are silent on the subject of Bala Bai's cenotaph, indicating that their writers were unaware of its existence.
  29. Chaturvedi, who was involved in the restoration program of these murals during the 1990s, maintains that their original palette was more muted, similar to the paintings in Bala Bai's chhatri.
  30. Although lacking his characteristic "mutton chops" sideburns, this figure is clearly Jayaji, identifiable through his distinctive Śivite *tilak*, portly figure, and dark skin tone, characteristics shared by the other renditions of him in this mural program.

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## THE BUDDHA'S WORDS AT CAVE TEMPLES

### *Inscribed Scriptures in the Design of Wofoyuan*

1

Cluster I with colossal reclining Buddha. Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

#### Abstract

Inscribed Buddhist scriptures were a vital part of cave temple architecture in China. This paper focuses on a later phase of development in the eighth century as exemplified by Wofoyuan, Sichuan. The site offers an exemplary case to examine these writings in stone as visual objects and foci of devotion, as it boasts one of the most extensive collections of Mahayana texts and one of the largest reclining Buddha statues in medieval China. This open theater of text and image is believed to have articulated a tangible program of soteriology, which held particular relevance in a time when Buddhist practitioners of the Tang dynasty were actively seeking ways to affirm their faith.

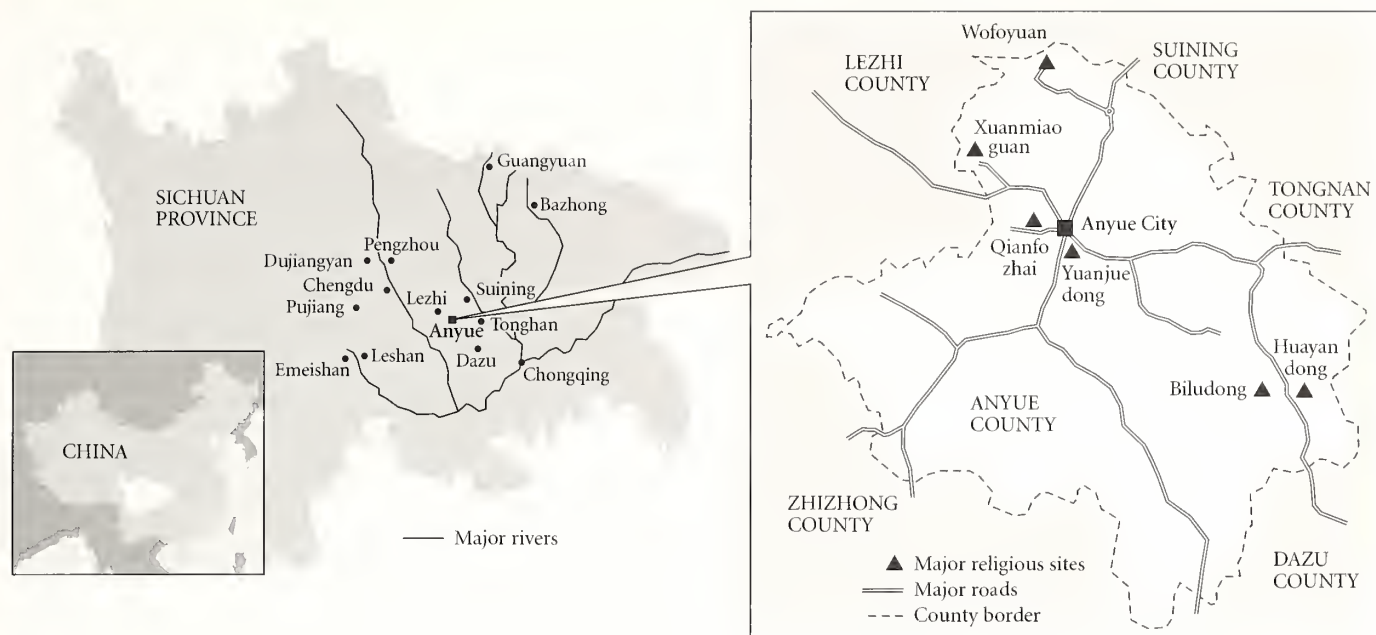
CAVE TEMPLES are a treasure trove of ideas and material remains for the study of Buddhism in premodern China. The multitudes of sculptures and painted murals preserved in situ have attracted scholarly attention for the illuminating perspectives they offer on artistic practices as well as religious devotion, social institutions, and local histories. However, until recently one significant category of artifacts at cave temples has not been studied extensively as part of Buddhist visual culture. These artifacts are canonical and apocryphal texts in the Buddhist tradition, often in excerpted form, that are inscribed onto precut slabs or directly onto wall surfaces. Commonly referred to as *shijing* 石經 or *kejing* 刻經 in Chinese, inscribed scriptures became a vital component of cave temple architecture in China rather late in its history, as they were featured prominently alongside pictorial imageries at sites in the northeastern region beginning in the second half of the sixth century. This paper aims to expand on a growing body of scholarship on the subject by investigating a later phase of development in the eighth century.<sup>1</sup> It was a period in which Sichuan province assumed a pivotal role.

Wofoyuan 臥佛院 in Anyue County 安岳 is a site of particular importance to the present discussion on inscribed scriptures at cave temples. Not only does it boast one of the most extensive and best-preserved collections from medieval China, but the very selection and distribution of these texts were also meticulously planned to shape the design of the site and articulate its intent. There, a twenty-three-meter-long reclining statue representing the Buddha Śākyamuni entering nirvana was carved along a low-rising cliff in a valley now filled with rice fields (fig. 1). Across from the colossal figure on the opposite side are some fifty individual cave temples and open niches in scattered clusters, many of which are densely inscribed with extensive passages from the *Nirvana Sutra* and other Buddhist scriptures.



The profusion of visual forms on a related theme at Wofoyuan provides us with an exceptional opportunity to probe into the dynamic interplay of text and image within a broader discussion on the nature of cave temples. This is because the inscribed scriptures at the Sichuan site were conceived to complement the pictorial program both thematically and spatially. To advance this argument, it is instructive to recognize at the outset the separation of content and form in these writings in stone, and to analyze each accordingly. In terms of content, inscribed scriptures are replications of the officially codified edition by which a text had typically been known, at times infused with variations that reflected local traditions.<sup>2</sup> A text was often selected to endorse one or several central themes articulated therein. When several texts were put together to form a larger program, certain themes were bound to emerge as the common thesis signaling the doctrinal or ideological bent of the program as a whole. In terms of form, inscribed scriptures underwent a major transformation from manuscript scroll format to stone, becoming an integral part of a built environment to be seen as a visual object rather than read as a book. In the process, these texts in stone took on the many characteristics that we tend to associate with pictorial images in terms of production, display, and composition. By scrutinizing where the inscribed scriptures were positioned, what was nearby, and how all these components corresponded to each other, we are in a position to fully map out the design logic of a cave temple site and gauge its overall purposes. This strategy in highlighting the materiality of our subject as much as its semantic meaning also paves the way to a better understanding of the mindset behind the use of inscribed scriptures, which had been a vital part of Chinese Buddhist devotional practices for many centuries.

Any study on Wofoyuan would not fail to note the overwhelming presence of the nirvana Buddha statue, unquestionably the largest extant specimen of its kind from medieval China and an uncommon appearance in Sichuan.<sup>3</sup> While the present study too investigates the nirvana theme, its main focus remains on the role that inscribed scriptures had in the purposeful juxtaposition with colossal statuary, the one basic feature that defined Wofoyuan as a cave temple site.<sup>4</sup> In addition to first analyzing the design, history, and topography of the site, I argue that the continuum of text and image was to articulate a tangible program of soteriology, which held particular relevance in an age when Buddhist practitioners were actively seeking ways to affirm their faith. In an open theater of rolling fields and carved mountain cliffs, the historical Buddha's absence from the human realm was adroitly erased by an emphatic assertion of his everlasting presence through his words and images. The concern with the Buddha's being or not being there was genuine, considering that China had just reemerged from an extended period under the devastating influence of a prophecy concerning the end of Buddhism.



2  
Map of major religious sites in  
Anyue County, Sichuan.

What makes Wofoyuan unique is the renewed optimism and self-reassurance of the eighth century that was articulated in such monumental, visual terms. The present age as one bereft of the Buddha's presence was declared on one side of the valley in the form of the nirvana image, to which a response was made on the other side, where we find a confident display of his words set in stone. This ongoing dialogue amounted to a call for continued adherence to the faith, expressed with utmost certainty in its permanence and universality. The nirvana theme, which was once linked closely to the pessimisms in Chinese Buddhist communities of the sixth century, was now given new meanings at Wofoyuan, where it was both a source of doubt and a harbinger of hope.

### Site Design, History, and Topography

Wofoyuan is located about forty kilometers north of Anyue City, within a network of tributary streams of the Paomatan River 跑馬灘河 that runs along the county's northern borders (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> Aside from a cursory reference in a late-eighteenth-century local gazette, little is known about the site from extant premodern records.<sup>6</sup> The material remains preserved in situ, however, have yielded a wealth of information about Wofoyuan's original plan and history.

The site encompasses a series of carvings and structures that appear on two sides of a natural cul-de-sac running along a roughly east-west course over some 250 meters. There are altogether 125 excavated cave temples and open niches of varying degrees of completion. Fifteen contain Buddhist scriptures inscribed onto the interior walls. The interiors assume the basic shape of a cave chamber or an excavated opening into the cliff, and are cubic in shape, typically about four-square meters in area, and accessible only from the front, which is approximately one to three meters elevated from ground. Pictorial images, on the other hand, are found in shallow niches mostly surrounding the exterior of scripture caves. While these sculpted forms can now be viewed freely from afar, the numerous strut holes around the openings suggest that many were once sheltered behind





TABLE 1 PICTORIAL AND SCRIPTURAL CONTENTS OF SEVEN CLUSTERS AT WOFOYUAN

Cluster (Niche and Cave Numbers)	Location	Principal Icons (Niche Number)	Principal Scriptures (Cave Number)
I (1–26)	North cliff	Reclining Buddha (3)	<i>Lotus Sutra</i> (1, 2)
II (27–38)	South cliff, 80 m directly across from cluster I	Śākyamuni Buddha (31) with two other seated Buddhas (30, 32)	<i>Sutra of the Names of Buddhas</i> (29)
III (42–59)	South cliff, 30 m east of cluster II	Three seated Buddhas (54) and a standing Buddha (50)	<i>Nirvana Sutra</i> (46, 51, 59)
IV (60–69)	South cliff, 5 m east of cluster III	Standing Buddha in long robe (64)	<i>Nirvana Sutra</i> (66)
V (70–79)	South cliff, 3 m east of cluster IV	Śākyamuni Buddha (70) and two Buddhas seated in pendant position (71, 72)	<i>Diamond Sutra</i> (71) and <i>Golden Light Sutra</i> (73)
VI (80–88)	South cliff, 10 m east of cluster V	Śākyamuni Buddha (82)	<i>Vimalakīrti Sutra</i> (83, 85)
VII (98–125)	North cliff, between 150 m and 200 m northeast of cluster I	Three seated Buddhas (116)	<i>Sutra of Repaying Kindness</i> (109, 110)

ally by one or several dominant images and thematically by a major scripture. A brief summary of the material contents in each cluster is provided in Table 1.

Like other cave complexes in China, Wofoyuan is a site of longevity that has undergone several cycles of creation and transformation. A handful of donor inscriptions found at the site identify three main periods of activity: specifically, the first two decades of the Kaiyuan era in Tang dynasty (720s–730s); the last decade of the Guangzheng era in the Later Shu Kingdom (950s–960s) of the Five Dynasties period; and throughout the twelfth century, in the period spanning the late Northern Song and early Southern Song dynasties. While the history of the site was necessarily complex, material evidence confirms that it was designed and initiated as a whole in the eighth century, and that much of what we see today dates from that period. That Wofoyuan was left mostly in its original plan during subsequent eras distinguishes it from other Sichuan cave temples, and the implications will be discussed shortly.

The content and location of donor inscriptions provide us with some concrete information about the initial state of Wofoyuan. Several short dedications dated



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4  
Cluster IV with standing Buddha.  
Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan,  
first half of the eighth century.  
Photograph by the author.

5  
Niches 63–69. Qianfozhai, Anyue,  
Sichuan, first half of the eighth  
century. Photograph by the author.

6  
Preaching assemblage, niche 31,  
cluster II. Wofoyuan, Anyue,  
Sichuan, first half of the eighth  
century. Photograph by the author.

to the Kaiyuan era give firm dates for four crucial cave sections, namely nos. 46, 50, and 59 of cluster III, and no. 73 of cluster V. The physical integrity of the inscriptions, pictorial images, and inscribed texts lends credibility to other parts of the same cluster that do not contain such documentation. Similarities in structural layout between these and many of the undated areas elsewhere at the site raise the likelihood that the latter was designed and constructed during the same period as well. Three such examples are clusters II, IV, and VI, all of which share a design layout that evenly juxtaposes deep, excavated openings for scriptures with shallow, outward-facing niches for pictorial images in a one- or two-story profile. This is in keeping with the physical appearance of dated clusters III and V, as both are essentially variations on the same design logic.

Among the few donors recorded at Wofoyuan, the monk Xuanying 玄應 is of particular importance. He was known to be a rector and lecturer affiliated with Xiyan Monastery 棲岩寺, a major Buddhist monastic establishment atop Dayun Mountain in Anyue where the cave temple complex Qianfozhai 千佛寨 is also located. From a number of dated inscriptions found there and at the nearby Yuan-





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Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, niche 46, cluster III. Wofoyuan, Anyue, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.



8

Standing bodhisattvas accompanying the medicine Buddha, niche 96. Qianfozhai, Anyue, Sichuan, eighth century. Photograph by the author.



9

Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, niche 55. Fexiange, Pujiang, Sichuan, early eighth century. Photograph by the author.

juedong 圓覺洞, it is clear that Xuanying was active in promoting Buddhism and had enjoyed support from local elite during the first half of the eighth century.<sup>10</sup> That his name also appears in an inscription dated to 733 in cave 46 at Wofoyuan accords well with the general chronology of his activities. More importantly, Xuanying's involvement there suggests that Wofoyuan likely drew upon the same patronage base as Qianfozhai, which involved the highest-ranking officials in the area and other members of the local elite.<sup>11</sup> The many similarities in architectural and figural type shared by both sites further underscore this close connection.

Generally speaking, both Wofoyuan and Qianfozhai adhere to a cave-building tradition that pervaded the central and northern regions of Sichuan, where much of the pre-ninth-century material is concentrated.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most telltale features specific to Anyue cave temples pertain to the architectural arrangement and style of the niches. Shallow pictorial niches tend to be grouped into a cluster of six to ten in two stories, depending on the shape and amount of exposed cliff surface available at a specific spot. Using cluster IV at Wofoyuan (fig. 4) and niches 63–69 at Qianfozhai (fig. 5) as examples, this was a technique purposefully deployed to take full advantage of the uneven, low-rising cliff sides over a large, extended area. Examining the individual units more closely, another telling similarity emerges in the form of a multfigured preaching assemblage set in a deep, semicircular open niche format. The layout of niche 31 at Wofoyuan (fig. 6), for instance, is reminiscent of many such niches found at Qianfozhai, such as niche 50. Because the entire assemblage is carved deeply into the cliff surface, with figures distributed evenly in a gradual recession into the innermost plane, the result gives an immensely stagelike impression. This highly three-dimensional style of niche rendering is in keeping with most Tang specimens found in Guangyuan 廣元 and Bazhong 巴中 in northern Sichuan, and at Pujiang 浦江 and Jiajiang 夾江 in central Sichuan, but rarely found in the Central Plain. At Longmen 龍門 or Xiangtangshan 響堂山, for instance, the open-niche format too was a popular compositional device, but was seldom rendered in such high relief.





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Seated Buddha with accompanying disciples and guardian kings, niche 82, cluster VI. Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

In terms of figural type, artisans at both Wofoyuan and Qianfozhai apparently relied on a similar stylistic repertoire for their works that parallels more closely the Pujiang- or Chengdu-area model than that of northern Sichuan.<sup>13</sup> A subtle curving of the body and an elongation of the lower half that results in a distortion of the overall bodily proportions are typical characteristics of standing bodhisattvas. Although clearly rendered by different hands, the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara from niche 46 at Wofoyuan (fig. 7) and the eight bodhisattvas in Qianfozhai niche 96 (fig. 8) bear an overall resemblance to the two standing examples at Feixian'ge 飛仙閣 niche 55 in Pujiang (fig. 9). Vajrapāni guardian figures, on the other hand, are mostly depicted as muscular dwarves. The penchant to exaggerate certain body parts is now reversed from elongation to shortening. As for Buddha figures, most specimens at Wofoyuan assume a dignified appearance in well-proportioned bodies and sensitively modeled robes. The style at the site bespeaks a preference for a somewhat sinicized rendering of Buddhist deities, a trend seen throughout central Sichuan at the time. Not coincidentally, the Buddha wearing a Chinese robe in niche 82 at Wofoyuan (fig. 10) sits atop an exquisitely carved pedestal, not unlike the seated Buddhas in the side niches of cave 24 at Qianfozhai (fig. 11).

The close connection that Wofoyuan and Qianfozhai share began in the eighth century and continued well into the twelfth. After an initial phase of intense activity during the Kaihuang era, both sites apparently entered into a period in which restoration of works dominated. Interestingly, patrons of Wofoyuan at this time were rather scrupulous about describing their activities, as they made clear distinctions between restoration and new commission. For instance, a local military official named Wang Yanzhao 王彥昭 was an active sponsor at Wofoyuan during the second half of the tenth century. In an inscription dated 959, the term *xiuzhuang* 修裝 was explicitly used to refer to the repair work he asked be rendered on the three seated Buddhas of niche 53. For a different commission two years later, the newly made image of a *dhāraṇī* pillar on the east wall of cave 51 was simply described as such in the corresponding inscription, with no addition of terms



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Side niches with seated Buddhas and standing bodhisattvas, cave 24, Qianfozhai, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

like *xiuzhuang* or *chongxiu* 重修. At Qianfozhai too, there are a few inscriptions recording restoration work from the tenth century, including one dated to 915 in cave 56, which seems to retain its original Tang composition. All these repair projects strongly imply that both Anyue sites were under some management regime, presumably the monastic establishment nearby, which sought to maintain and preserve older constructions by carefully monitoring repair jobs on the one hand and by assigning newer projects to other locations at the site on the other hand. By the twelfth century, however, the management at Qianfozhai seems to have lost control, as destructive alterations began to occur in abundance. One notable case is niche 24, a large-scale Tang original dated to 745, the main preaching assemblage of which was thoroughly redone in a recognizably Southern Song style in 1192.<sup>14</sup> Radical re-creations like this continued to occur through time, as Qianfozhai remained a vital religious site owing largely to its central location near the county seat. One unfortunate outcome was that the original Tang design of the site was gradually eroded away, as subsequent patrons became more emboldened to alter or even tear down older images in order to make room for the new.

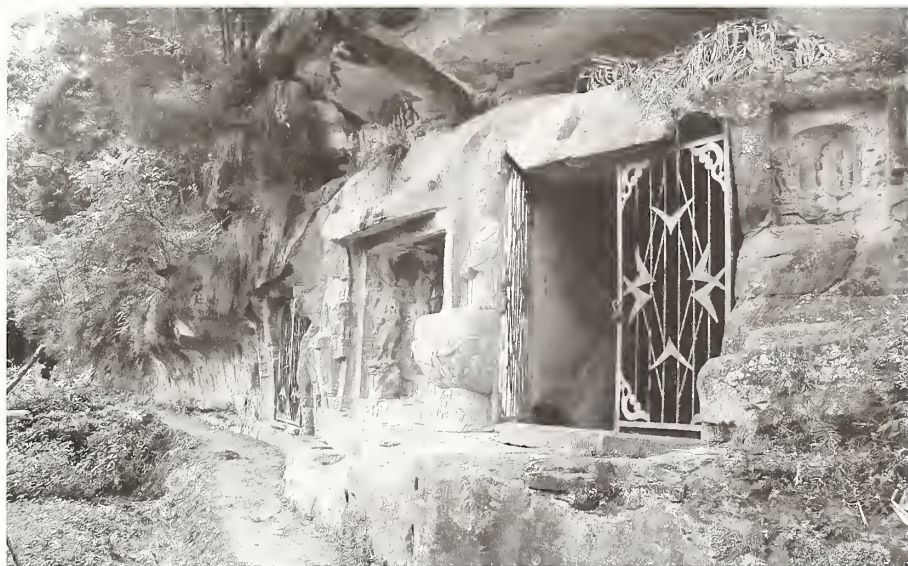
Wofoyuan, by contrast, did not seem to be severely affected by such modifications. Its remoteness had helped insulate the site from destruction by overzealous devotees in peaceful times or warring parties in periods of political uncertainty. At the same time, there seems to have been no serious growth or revival after mainstream patronage declined in the twelfth century and afterward. Unlike other sites

in central Sichuan, such as Zhonglongshan 重龍山 in Zizhong 資中 or Qianfoyan 千佛岩 in Jiajiang 夾江, where later growths contributed handsomely to the overall richness of the sites, Wofoyuan boasts no major addition after the initial phase of creation. There was a series of restoration projects or minor additions dating from the tenth to mid-twelfth century, after which time the site was practically abandoned.<sup>15</sup> It is quite ironic that the abandonment occurred not long after a few local monks had labored fervently to revive the site in the wake of vicious attacks by bandits at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>16</sup>

In noting the many similarities shared by the two Anyue sites, the foregoing analysis also paves the way for a discussion of the methodical process of construction at Wofoyuan, which was never practiced at Qianfozhai or anywhere else in the entire region prior to the ninth century. The systematic approach testifies to the unprecedented scale of the original plan of the site as well as an underlying will to impart thematic and stylistic coherence throughout. One such telltale sign can be found in the rendering of the halos of principal icons. This stylistic signature essentially entails an inner frame demarcated by five points of decorative interest that are evenly distributed around the circumference, as exemplified by the standing bodhisattva in niche 19 of cluster I, the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara in niche 46 of cluster III (fig. 7), the standing Buddha in niche 64 of cluster IV, and the seated Buddha in niche 82 of cluster VI (fig. 10). In fact, this style of halo is used at the site with such consistency that it can be found at all clusters behind the heads of its respective principal icons.<sup>17</sup> Its presence throughout Wofoyuan helps confirm that the majority of these icons were initiated at the same time, possibly by the same workshop of artisans.

Carving practices like this carry broader implications for understanding the construction process of Wofoyuan. To be sure, they indicate that the entire site was first carefully surveyed in order to locate all cliff surfaces suitable for carving, and then demarcated into various clusters in accordance with the available space. In this light, the principal icons were probably the first to be completed so as to anchor some key points of interest throughout the site. The full scriptural contents were then filled in, possibly by another group of skilled workers. The somewhat unfinished state of clusters like no. V lends support to this hypothesis. Also noteworthy is the existence of two additional groups of unfinished cave openings at Wofoyuan that offer glimpses into the fullest design of the plan as once envisioned by the founders. The first group of these caves is located between clusters II and III on the south cliff; the second is east of cluster VI. Each contains several crudely excavated openings with no pictorial image outside or inscribed text inside. Their unfinished state might well be conscious abandonment by the builders upon realizing the unsuitability of the rocks for carving at a later stage





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Cave 29 (right) and niches 30–32 in cluster II. Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

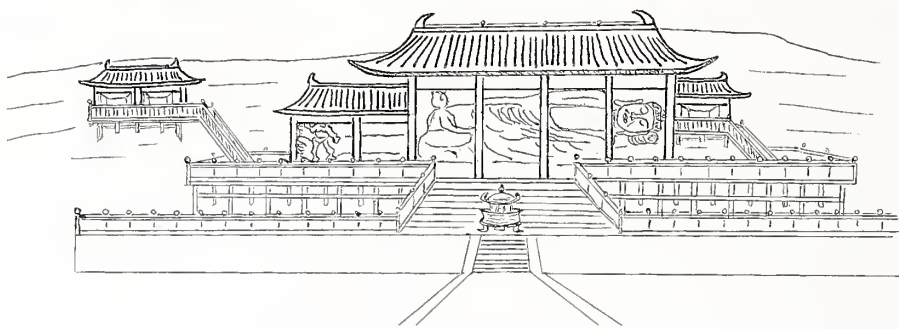
of work. Or it could also mean that these unfinished groups only held secondary importance within the overall thematic program at Wofoyuan. While it is no longer possible to determine exactly at what point these unfinished cave openings were excavated in relation to the other finished clusters, we can at least infer from them that the founders had made priorities for the project by completing areas of major importance first and then those of lesser urgency.

The present analysis of the construction process at Wofoyuan would not be complete without a discussion of the impact that local topography had on the distribution and configuration of material objects and structures throughout the site. A case in point is the design of cluster I, which is without a doubt the most impressive at the site.<sup>18</sup> A close examination of the rock formation in the vicinity reveals that the rock surface on which the colossal nirvana Buddha was carved is the only section of the cliff suitable for carving monumental sculpture, and that the rock formation on the opposite side of the valley has too limited an exposed area to allow for any such undertaking. The founders of Wofoyuan too must have been aware of the unique topography of the site and its ideal potential for monumental sculpture. Following a regional tradition of building colossal Buddhas that first arose in the sixth century, the builders decided on a twenty-three-meter-long statue representing Śākyamuni entering nirvana, a subject that would allow them to take full advantage of the horizontal expanse of a low-rising cliff side that is only ten meters high.<sup>19</sup>

To make the colossal statue a better fit within the site plan, the builders of Wofoyuan forsook the age-old iconographic convention of depicting a nirvana Buddha lying on his right side. By reversing the head to the right (east) and feet to the left (west), the new configuration allows for a purposeful realignment of the valley such that the head of the reclining Buddha statue faces perpendicular to the center of cluster II (i.e., niche 31 and two large seated Buddhas on the flanks), about eighty meters away on the south cliff (fig. 12). The result creates a dynamic spatial continuum that thematically connects the colossal Buddha to cluster II. The latter, not coincidentally, celebrates the infinite, continuous succession of Buddhas in the universe through the three Buddhas motif and the *Sutra of the Names of*



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Cliff surface around the reclining Buddha, Cluster I, Wofoyan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

14  
A reconstruction of cluster I. Wofoyan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Drawing by the author.

*Buddhas*. This thematic link is further developed in the other clusters along the south cliff. Although it is not clear how Wofoyan was accessed during medieval times, the layout literally required visitors to view the material on one side before proceeding to the other, regardless of the direction they came from.<sup>20</sup> One might visit all the clusters on the south cliff before seeing the colossal statue as the climax of the journey. Or, one might get awe-struck by the nirvana Buddha at the beginning and learn about its meanings afterward through a visit to the clusters on the opposite side.

In its finished state, the reclining Buddha at Wofoyan was once covered by a wooden structure in front. The many rectangular strut holes along the outer peripheries of the carved area indicate that this structure was built for the dual function of sheltering the high-relief sculptures and inscribed scriptures, as well as providing visitors with proper access to the elevated areas (fig. 13). As illustrated in a reconstruction in Figure 14, the wooden shelter must have been of considerable size, as it stretched twenty-five meters from one end to the other and extended over twelve meters out from the cliff surface, on which the structure was partially dependent for support. Although now obscured by a row of sculpted niches underneath the reclining Buddha, the strut holes in the lower section reveal that there was once an elevated platform about three meters from the ground that ran the length from the head of the Buddha to the seated figure at the abdomen of the statue (about thirteen meters in length).<sup>21</sup> Another set in the area above the reclining





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15

Seated Maitreya Buddha.  
Leshan, Sichuan, 713–803.  
Photograph by the author.

ing Buddha's body also reveal that the roof was erected at two different levels, one atop the upper torso of the Buddha and the twenty-one-figure preaching scene immediately above—which probably measured about eleven meters in length and nearly ten meters from the ground—and the other atop the lower half of the body of the statue, which was about six meters from the ground and ten meters horizontally. Two separate flights of stairs must have been attached at the two ends, allowing visitors to climb up to the niche with two bodhisattvas to the east and the two scripture caves to the west of the Buddha.

Because the wooden shelter has long disappeared, it is convenient for us to neglect its existence and focus solely on the carved sculptures. Even if it were to exist alongside the colossal statue today, the structure might still be regarded as secondary in importance or dismissed as a mere decorative prop with no significant purpose. An examination of monumental outdoor sculpture in China, however, proves the contrary, revealing that the coexistence of a colossal statue and its shelter was in fact a salient feature of all large-scale Buddha statues from medieval times.

In addition to providing protection and access, a key justification for building a wooden structure in front of a colossal statue was to delegate a particular kind of vision, one that aimed to create an asymmetrical relationship between statue and viewer. Taking Leshan as an example, the great Maitreya Buddha was carved in a vertical cliff at the intersection of the Min 岷, Qingyi 青衣, and Datu 大渡 Rivers, dominating the surrounding landscape with a seated body that measures sixty meters in height and twenty-four meters in width (fig. 15). Although the shelter in front is no longer extant, it was described in records from earlier times. According to the Southern Song poet Fan Chengda 范成大, the structure was thirteen-stories high, covering the statue from head to toe. A recent study proposes that the entire structure was probably eighty to ninety meters tall, with the height of each story gradually diminishing from bottom to top.<sup>22</sup> Because there was little space in front of the statue, the visitor might view the cliff face in its entirety only from a distant point on the water. The gaze at the statue must have been momentary, for the rapid current simply would not allow for a long fixed viewing spot. The design



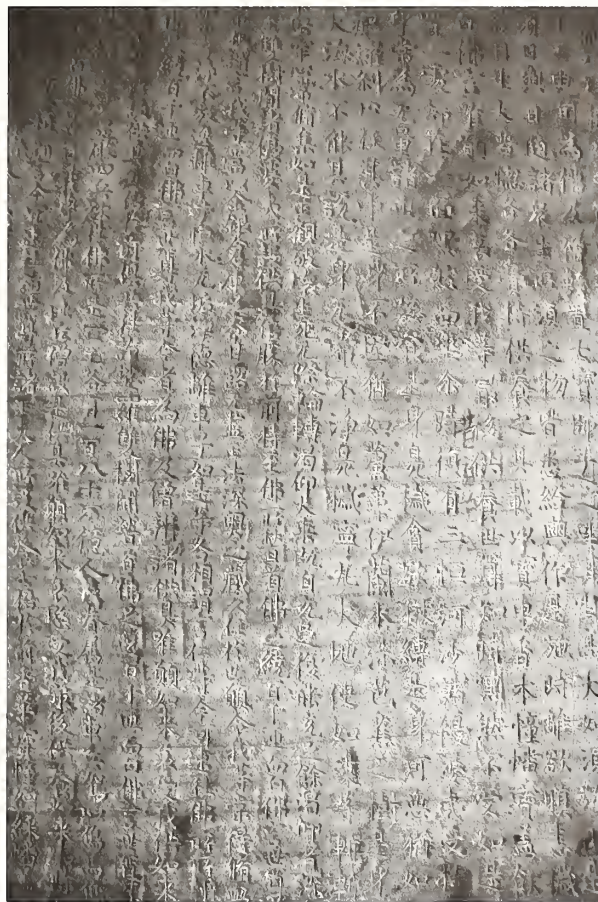
of the shelter was such that the panoramic vision of the statue was further limited to a few exposed body parts such as the head and feet. The visual logic at work at Leshan in effect helped deter a perceptual totality of the entire iconographic construct. This was achieved by physical distance and visual obstruction, thus resulting in a relationship between statue and viewer that would remain unevenly hierarchical.

What was the appeal of this type of hierarchical vision? And how did a colossal reclining Buddha rather than a standing or seated one affect the overall character of the cave temple site? To be sure, seeing any depiction of Śākyamuni entering nirvana is a rather unsettling experience. Unlike a Maitreya Buddha, whose upright, imposing countenance emits hope and majesty, there is a fundamental ambiguity intrinsic to the nirvana image, which inevitably leads the viewer to wonder: Is the Buddha alive or “dead”? Why is it that a deity of such supreme, transcendental power is passing into nothingness? Will I be able to survive without his illuminating presence? And how can Buddhism possibly continue in the absence of its most representative spokesman?

The question of survival was not new to the history of Buddhism, as there had been countless debates since the passage of the historical Buddha. At Wofoyuan, it was presented as a matrix of physical juxtapositions, in which the situation was stated and responded to respectively by monumental statuary and inscribed texts. By virtue of its size and subject matter, the colossal reclining statue is the focal point of the entire site. A series of five clusters of sculpted niches and scripture caves on the opposite side offer a cogent counterpoint to enhance the understanding and neutralize or negate any possible misreading of the nirvana image across the valley. Exactly what this “response” in inscribed texts entailed and how it was materialized at Wofoyuan is the subject of the next section.

### **Inscribed Scriptures in Sichuan and Beyond**

In its present state, Wofoyuan boasts fifteen scripture caves that are evenly distributed among the seven major clusters, with two or three situated in each: nos. 1 and 2 in cluster I; nos. 29 and 33 in cluster II; nos. 46, 51, and 59 in cluster III; no. 66 in cluster IV; nos. 71, 73, and 76 in cluster V; nos. 83 and 85 in cluster VI; and nos. 109 and 110 in cluster VII. In all caves, texts are carved directly onto the wall surface inside, at times occupying all three walls from right to left and from top to bottom or sometimes covering only parts of one or two walls. While a scripture may not appear in its selected entirety within one setting or follow an incremental order (i.e., from fascicle one onward), each inscribed section is documented properly with the title of the scripture, the fascicle number, and the name of the translator. Appearing in regular or *kai* script, with each character measuring about 1.5 cm in



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Detail from the *Nirvana Sutra*,  
west wall, cave 59, cluster III.  
Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan,  
first half of the eighth century.  
Photograph by the author.

width and height, all texts are believed to have been first written in ink directly onto the wall surface by scribes, then carved out by artisans.<sup>23</sup> As cave 59 (fig. 16) exemplifies, this method would have entailed a different set of technical and organizational complications than simply inscribing on portable stone slabs. Not only did the interior space of the cave need to be properly excavated before any inscribing could be carried out, each wall could only be inscribed by a small team of artisans at a time in order to ensure consistency in style and quality throughout the site. The availability of daylight hours probably also affected the efficiency of their work.

So far, eighteen Buddhist scriptures from the Mahayana canon have been identified at Wofoyuan.<sup>24</sup> A close examination of these texts in terms of content, edition, and placement within the site yields several significant patterns. First, one or two principal scriptures tend to dominate each cluster. The texts are often presented in their entirety or in extensive excerpts. This is the case with Kumārajīva's translation of the *Lotus Sutra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, T. no. 262) in cluster I; the *Sutra of the Names of Buddhas* (*Foming jing* 佛名經, T. no. 440) in cluster II; the Dharmakṣema translation of the *Nirvana Sutra* (*Da ban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T. no. 374) in clusters III and IV; the *Golden Light Sutra* (*Jingguangming jing* 金光明經, T. no. 663) in cluster V; Kumārajīva's translation of the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* (*Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經, T. no. 475) in cluster VI; and the *Sutra on Repaying Kindness* (*Baoen jing* 報恩經, T. no. 156) in cluster VII. While some of the clusters do not include any additional text, others feature supplementary texts



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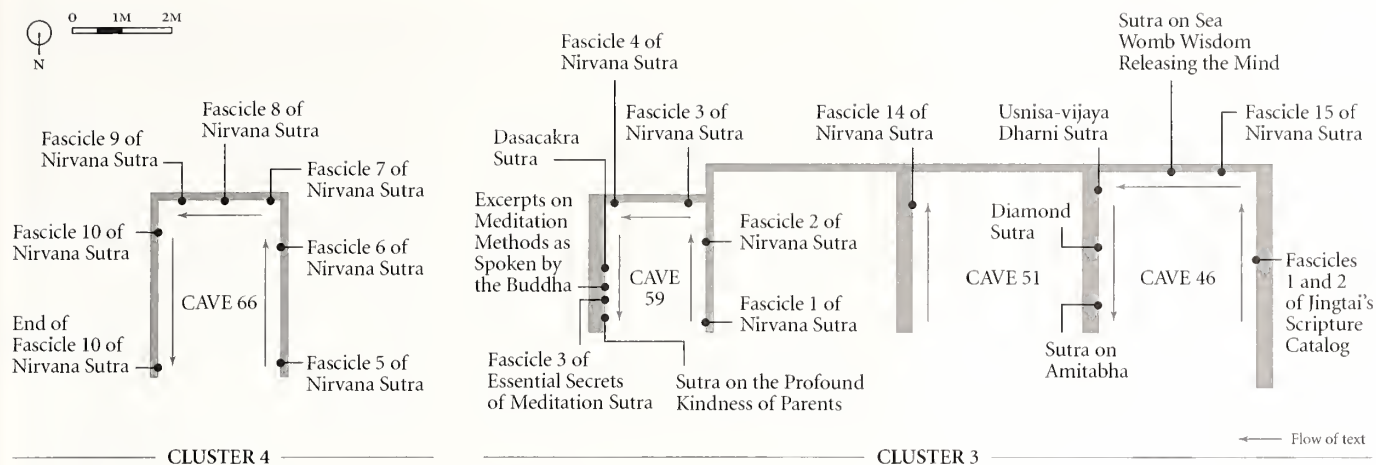
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The *Diamond Sutra* in its entirety,  
west wall, cave 71, cluster V.  
Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan,  
first half of the eighth century.  
Photograph by the author.

that are much shorter in length and are typically inscribed side by side with the principal scriptures. Notable among this second group of texts are a handful of scriptures of apocryphal or esoteric origin found in cave 59 of cluster III, including the *Sutra on the Profound Kindness of Parents* (*Fumu enzhong jing* 父母恩重經, T. no. 2887), *Sutra on the Essential Secrets of Meditation* (*Foshuo chanmiyao jing* 佛說禪秘要經, T. no. 613), and Xuanzang's translation of the *Daśacakra Sutra* (*Dajī dizang shilun jing* 大集地藏十輪經, T. no. 411).<sup>25</sup> Also noteworthy is the repeated appearance of two types of texts in various clusters. The first type pertains to the *Diamond Sutra*, which appears in a variety of excerpted forms in caves 29, 46, 71, and 76; the most complete presentation is found in cave 71 of cluster V, where the Kumārajīva translation (*Jingang banruo buoluoni jing* 金剛般若波羅密經, T. no. 235) is inscribed in its entirety on the west wall (fig. 17). The second type concerns *dhāraṇī* or magical spells, which are based on texts like the *Abhiṣeka Sutra* (*Guan-ding jing* 灌頂經, T. no. 1331) and *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī-sūtra* (*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經, T. no. 967).

Another notable characteristic of the scriptural program at Wofoyuan can be seen in the close adherence of all principal texts to the standard edition of the time. Based on the most widely accepted translations available, the six principal scriptures were rendered into stone with remarkable precision. The care that went into the production attests to the high level of monastic literacy needed for overseeing and executing the inscribing process. There was also considerable interest in adhering to the highest standards as set by monastic establishments in





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Distribution of the *Nirvana Sutra* and other Buddhist scriptures in clusters III and IV. Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century.

the capital. The unusual inclusion of two fascicles from the scripture catalogue *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 (T. no. 2148) in cave 46 illustrates this point. Compiled by the monk Jingtai 靜泰 between 663 and 665 at Jing-ai Monastery 敬愛寺 in Luoyang, the *Zhongjing mulu* was the updated version of a catalogue of the same name that was first commissioned by the Sui court in 602.<sup>26</sup> Considering the time of Wofoyuan's construction, Jingtai's catalogue was evidently the most up-to-date list of Buddhist scriptures available to the Sichuan team at the time. Interestingly, a cross-check with the scriptural content of Wofoyuan reveals that the overall selection and distribution of scriptures at the Sichuan site were not based on the content or order of listing in the *Zhongjing mulu*. In fact, only six scriptures inscribed at the site were selected from the some 440 items listed in the part of the catalogue inscribed in cave 46, whereas two additional items appear in the third fascicle of the catalogue but were not carved in situ.<sup>27</sup> Some of the most important texts promulgated by the scripture catalogue were not included at Wofoyuan at all. The noticeable absence of the Buddhahadra translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (T. no. 278), the very first entry in Jingtai's catalogue, sufficiently proves the point. In short, the catalogue seems to have been included not so much as a generative source but rather as a supplement to the principal scriptures at the site.

The spatial configuration of stone scriptures at Wofoyuan has much to tell us about the kind of messages they were intended to convey. Of the seven clusters at Wofoyuan, three are exclusively devoted to presenting their respective principal scriptures in their entirety with no other texts attached. As seen in cluster I with the *Lotus Sutra*, cluster VI with the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, and cluster VII with the *Sutra of Repaying Kindness*, these texts are presented systematically from start to finish, beginning at the upper-right-hand corner of the east wall, then proceeding downward and toward the back, and continuing onto the west wall; oftentimes the text resumes in the adjacent cave in the same manner until the end.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, an eclectic admixture of extensive passages from key scriptures and brief excerpts from supplementary texts characterize the other four clusters (II, III, IV, and V). Although the mode of presentation is nearly identical with the first group, what is significant is that the three principal scriptures involved in the latter group, namely the *Sutra of the Names of Buddhas*, the *Nirvana Sutra*, and the *Golden Light*



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Portion of west wall inscribed with the *Nirvana Sutra*, cave 59, cluster III. Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

*Sutra*, are all considerably longer than those in the first group. Given the amount of space allotted to these texts in their respective clusters, it is clear that the intention was to inscribe these texts not in their entirety but only in selection.

Within this context, the rendering of the *Nirvana Sutra* in clusters III and IV is particularly informative (fig. 18). The Dharmakṣema translation of the scripture was a text of more than 400,000 characters that was presented as fourteen chapters in forty fascicles. The version found at Wofoyuan represents merely twenty-five percent of the entire text, covering primarily the first four chapters in ten fascicles. Yet the amount of space allotted to its inscription makes the *Nirvana Sutra* the most prominently displayed scripture at the site, with four separate caves assigned to the task (i.e., nos. 59, 46, and 51 in cluster III, and no. 66 in cluster IV). Among these four caves, nos. 59 and 66 were designed primarily for the inscription, whereas nos. 46 and 51 contain additional excerpts that appear to have been made at a slightly later date. A close examination of the spatial distribution of the stone scripture text helps clarify the discrepancies.

Beginning with the first fascicle on the west wall of cave 59, the inscription of the *Nirvana Sutra* proceeds continuously onto the south and east walls in the same cave, covering up to the beginning of the fourth chapter (end of the fourth fascicle) along with excerpts from three other texts that serve almost as space fillers. Exquisitely carved floral patterns and apsara figures frame the top and bottom of all inscribed areas, giving the impression that it was probably the first scripture cave to be completed at the site (fig. 19). The scripture resumes in cave 66 about eight meters away, where the remainder of chapter four on Tathāgata-dhātu (fifth to tenth fascicles) was engraved in a similar counter-clockwise direction. From this point onward, the stone scripture text skips ahead to the fourteenth fascicle (mostly chapter seven on sacred acts), which is presented in full on the left wall of cave 51 in a clockwise direction, occupying approximately half of the available space. Parts of the fifteenth fascicle (chapter eight on deva acts) are preserved on the back of cave 46.

Significantly, the *Nirvana Sutra* was not continued beyond clusters III and IV. The appearance of the fourteenth and fifteenth fascicles in caves 51 and 46 marks a notable reversal of the eastward flow of the text from caves 59 to 66. This subtle departure from the norm set by the two primary scripture caves has two implications: Either the sections of the *Nirvana Sutra* in caves 51 and 46 were added as an afterthought, or they were put in upon the realization that there was not enough space in cave 66 to incorporate additional passages. Regardless, it is still clear that the *Nirvana Sutra* was intended only for clusters III and IV and not anywhere else at the site, and that it was mainly represented by the first four chapters in ten fascicles.

The unique material state of the inscribed scriptures at Wofoyuan calls our attention to their devotional functions and doctrinal implications. To better understand the historical significance of our subject, it is important to analyze it vis-à-vis other comparable sites from medieval China. We may begin with some recorded examples in Sichuan that were built prior to the eighth century but are no longer extant. Particularly illuminating is Guanghua Monastery 光化寺 on the hills of Pengzhou 彭州, which was first initiated by a monk named Daoyin some time in the early Tang period. The “Stele Inscription and Preface for the Late Great Sage of Sutra Translation, Master Daoyin of Duobao Monastery of Yizhou in the Great Tang” 大唐故翻經大德益州多寶寺道因法師碑文并序 by Li Yan 李儼 (dated 663) provides an authoritative biographical account. The monk was known for his popular lectures on a range of Mahayana scriptures—including the *Nirvana Sutra*—as well as his subsequent participation in Xuanzang’s translation activities in Chang’an.<sup>29</sup> What is of special interest is the passage concerning Daoyin’s residency at Guanghua Monastery, during which time he spearheaded a project to inscribe Buddhist scriptures at a cliff north of the temple as part of a greater effort to revive the monastic community there. While the stele text by Li Yan does not specify which scriptures were included or how they were made and displayed, it does provide a revealing description of what these writings in stone were intended to achieve: “No matter how rushing flood water surges below or how blazing fire rages above, these numinous texts will last forever through *kalpas*. Those who are lost in the follies of life will experience an awakening of the mind upon seeing [these texts]; those who follow [the Buddha’s] teachings in later times will attain enlightenment upon consulting them in detail.”<sup>30</sup> Toward the end of the stele record, it is further stated that after Daoyin’s death in Chang’an in 658, his body was subsequently returned to Guanghua Monastery and buried next to the stone scriptures. Thousands of followers, laymen, and monks alike came to honor the memory of the master in the powerful presence of the stone scriptures that he helped create years earlier. As the mourners gathered in grief, the moun-



tains are reported to “have resounded with great noise echoing throughout the valleys, whereas the clouds above soon changed color.”

The stele record concerning Daoyin is an important resource for the present study of Wofoyuan for several reasons. First of all, it has shown that the tradition of inscribing Buddhist scriptures onto mountain cliffs in Sichuan could be traced back to the first half of the seventh century if not earlier, and that the practice likely first arose in and around the Chengdu area, following precedents introduced from the Central Plain. The rather rapid dissemination of the new medium in central Sichuan is supported by other recorded instances as well as actual surviving fragments. For the former, Wang Bo’s 王勃 “Stele Record on Jinghui Monastery at Wudu Mountains in Mianzhu County of Yizhou” 益州綿竹縣武都山淨慧寺碑 (dated 670) contains a few tantalizing descriptions about the Buddhist scriptures at this mountaintop temple, which were referred to as “scriptures on stone cliffs” 石壁經文 or “treasured volumes at Scripture Mountain” 寶籍於經山.<sup>31</sup> For the latter, the earliest extant stone scriptures from Sichuan were found inside two cave chambers at Lingyanshan 靈岩山 in Guan County 灌縣 (today’s Dujiangyan outside Chengdu) in the nineteenth century. Until recent decades, little was done to document and preserve these stone fragments, thus resulting in the loss of the majority of the contents within the caves. Only some six hundred fragments, mostly in rather poor condition, have been preserved. Hu Wenhe has identified some of the fragments as originating from the *Mahāprajñā*, *Nirvana*, *Abhiṣeka*, and *Avataṃsaka* sutras, arguing that they were probably made some time in the seventh century.<sup>32</sup>

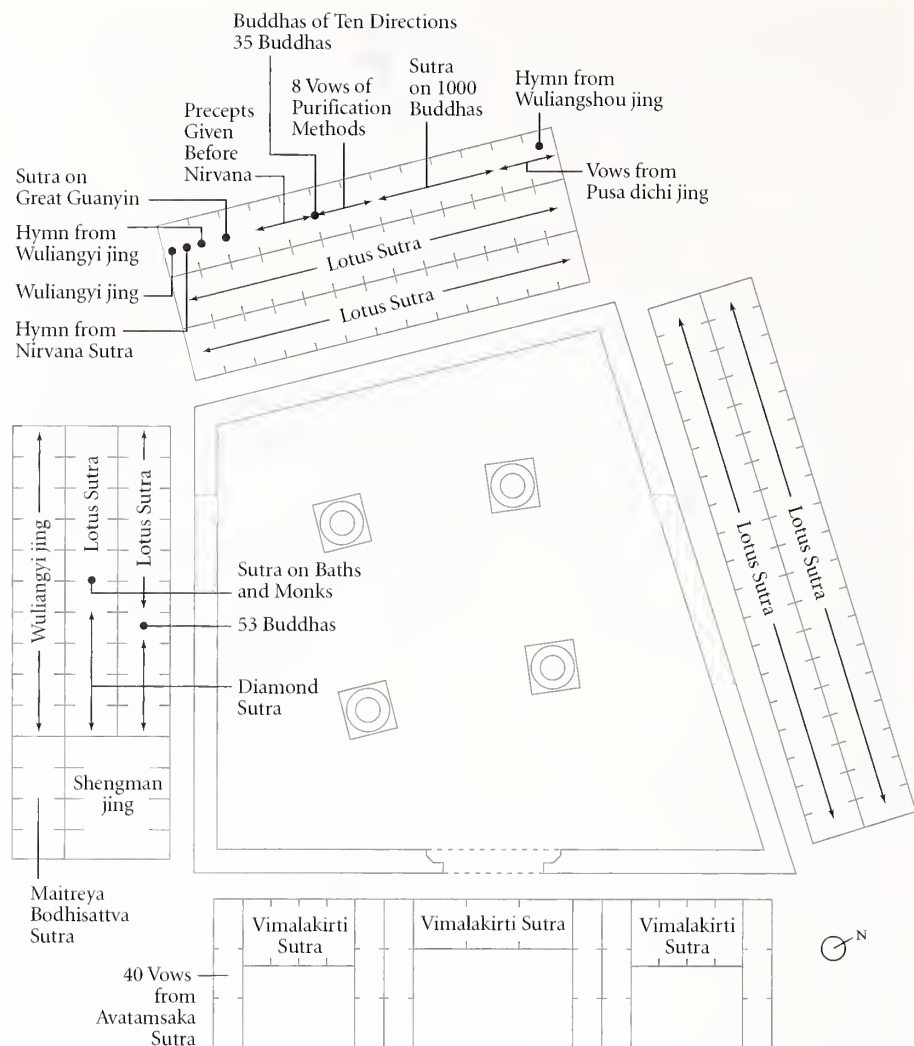
The second point to be made about the stone scriptures in Pengzhou has to do with the involvement of an eminent monk in the creation and reception of these texts. In the case of Daoyin, his erudition of Buddhist scriptures together with an uncanny ability to explain them to the public had earned him great fame in Sichuan and later in the Tang capital. His decision to be buried alongside the inscribed scriptures in Pengzhou rather than at the other urban monasteries with which he had affiliations was a clear indication of the close self-identification that the monk sought to achieve with the inscribed scriptures in life and in death. The choice of stone as the preferred medium and mountain cliffs as the ideal setting is significant here, for the combination—at least in the minds of Daoyin and his associates—would allow for optimal preservation of the objects and by extension their maker’s legacy such that the two could stand the test of time and the ravages of the elements. The situation here readily evokes a well-known precedent set half a century ago by the eminent monk Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605). Despite the great favors that the Sui court bestowed on him, Lingyu chose to be buried instead at Lingquan Monastery 靈泉寺 outside Anyang (at the southern tip of present-

day Hebei province), where the Dazhusheng Cave, with those stone scriptures and pictorial carvings he helped design, later became a popular destination among monks in search of Lingyu's legacy.<sup>33</sup>

The commemorative power of the stone scriptures at Guanghua Monastery has brought us to the third point of discussion, namely the range of functions that these writings in stone were perceived to fulfill at cave temples. As explicitly stated in Li Yan's text, the professed desire to preserve Buddhist scriptures for eternity was one prime motivation behind their creation, but exactly what the visitors to the temple did with or expected to gain from these writings still remains an open question. We may at least glean from Daoyin's biography a few clues to clarify the situation. One important observation is that the monk gave his many popular lectures at urban monasteries such as Duobao 多寶寺 or Huiji 慧日寺, whereas there was no mention at all of any such activities in front of the stone scriptures at the hilltop Guanghua Monastery. The discrepancy indicates that these texts were not meant to serve as visual props to enhance audience comprehension in a public lecture. The vivid description of the stone scriptures as objects to be "seen" by both laymen and monks alike further suggests that they were not hidden away, only to be used in some occasional esoteric rituals. Alternatively, these writings in stone were probably intended to address certain deeper needs that pertained not so much to the world of everyday practice as to that of the spiritual and the imaginary.

According to the stele record, the stone scriptures at Guanghua Monastery were thought to have almost magical power in accomplishing seemingly impossible tasks, such as rekindling "an awakening of the mind" for the uninitiated and accelerating the course of "enlightenment" for the initiated. The mysterious potency attributed to these inscribed texts in many ways rendered them "sacred objects" that shared the same level of religious efficacy as pictorial icons or relics of the Buddha. When regarded as such, as Robert Campany and John Kieschnick have remarked separately, it is not their doctrinal content but "how they are used...how they are perceived, received, and socially constituted" that has made these texts meaningful as objects of devotion.<sup>34</sup> Although the pattern of thinking and behavior at work here is one constituted chiefly within the literary genre of miracle tales and hagiographies, there is much veracity to it as a fact of life in medieval China. To be sure, similar objects like the stone scriptures at Wofoyuan have survived to serve as indirect evidence confirming the practice.

Needless to say, the tradition of using writings as some form of "sacred objects" to negotiate with the supernatural world has been in practice in China since antiquity.<sup>35</sup> What is remarkable about the rise of inscribed Buddhist scriptures in general is that these texts were featured as the effecting agency to address mainly Buddhist concerns, even though they followed a more or less recognizable pat-



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Distribution of Buddhist scriptures in Leiyin Cave, Fangshan, Beijing, early seventh century.

tern of actions and expectations from the pre-Buddhist past. The development in Sichuan was a significant one within this larger context, because the makers there had given the fullest expression to the increasingly indispensable partnership of text and image in achieving a greater sense of connectedness with the self and the worlds beyond. Before we return to Wofoyuan to delve further into the meanings of the pairing of stone scriptures with the colossal nirvana Buddha, it is crucial to consider two cave temple sites outside Sichuan in order to complete the present discussion. They are the Leiyin Cave at Fangshan 房山 in the southwestern suburbs of present-day Beijing, and the central cave in the Leigutai 擂鼓台 cluster at the eastern hills of Longmen Caves. These two sites were well known to Buddhist communities in the capitals, and it must have been there that monks from Sichuan learned about them. As Fangshan and Longmen were initiated respectively at the beginning and near the end of the seventh century, they were the immediate predecessors to Wofoyuan from the Central Plain. The remarkable condition of preservation at both sites enables us to learn much about the selection of scriptures and modes of display, the two aspects that authors of textual accounts generally ignore.





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The *Lotus Sutra*, north wall,  
Leiyin Cave, Fangshan, Beijing,  
early seventh century. Photograph  
by the author.

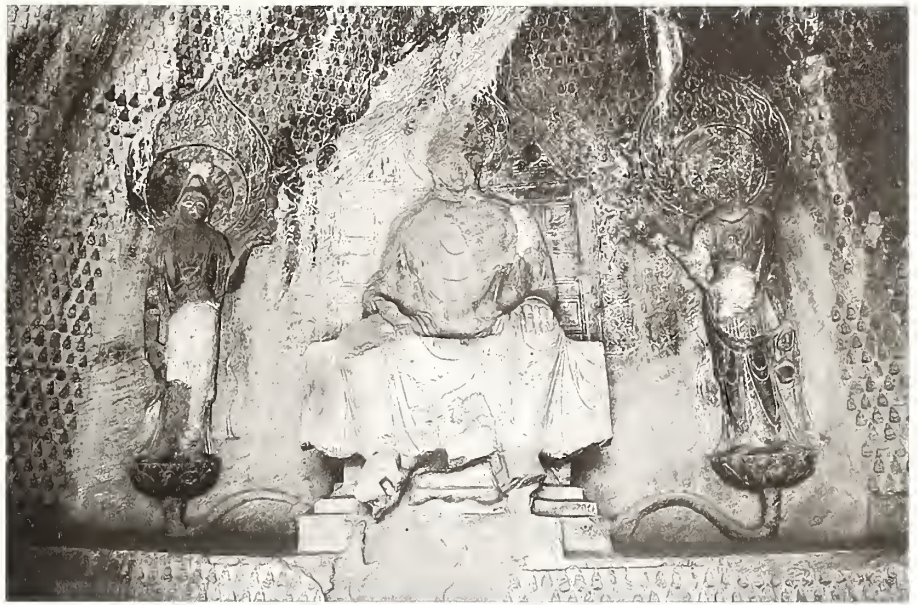
At Fangshan, the monk Jingwan 靜琬 (d. 639) began what would become the largest scripture-inscribing project in premodern China some time in the first two decades of the seventh century.<sup>36</sup> In his lifetime and over the course of the next five centuries under his followers, Jingwan's determination to preserve the entire Buddhist canon in stone had driven the systematic production of more than 1,100 texts covering some 14,000 stone slabs, often on both sides. These stones were then stored inside nine cave chambers atop Stone Scriptures Mountain 石經山 and a large underground hoard in the foothills at the Yunju Monastery 雲居寺. In the long, complex history of Fangshan, the first phase of activities under Jingwan is of particular relevance to the present study. Not only have nearly all the stone scriptures produced under his leadership survived in situ, but there are also a number of inscriptions by the monk himself and others that offer insights into the purpose and nature of the project. What is more, the scope of Jingwan's original planning had remained largely unaltered until the 720s, when his fifth-generation follower Xuanfa 玄法 began to carve additional major Buddhist scriptures with the generous patronage of Elder Princess Jinxian 金仙長公主, the sister of Emperor Xuanzong.<sup>37</sup> One important implication of this development is that this first phase of activities at Fangshan was probably what the Sichuan builders bore in mind when they initiated their own projects, as the sponsorship by members of the Tang court during the Kaiyuan reign of Xuanzong might well have spurred local interest in similar undertakings in other parts of the country.

Much of what Jingwan planned for Fangshan has been preserved in four cave chambers (nos. 5–9) at Stone Scriptures Mountain, of which the Leiyin Cave (no. 5) is the centerpiece. Unlike all other units in which vertical stone slabs were packed tightly into the available space, the Leiyin Cave boasts an open, spacious interior supported by four slender stone pillars in the middle, with 157 inscribed stone slabs lining the four walls in two or three registers (fig. 20). Altogether, nineteen scriptures have been identified, all of which belonged to the medieval Chinese Mahayana canon.<sup>38</sup> The *Lotus Sutra* in the Kumārajīva translation (T. no. 262) is

the most prominent, as it is represented in its entirety, covering nearly two-thirds of the wall space inside the cave (fig. 21). The complete *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* by the same translator (T. no. 475) comes second, occupying nearly the whole east wall. Six other short texts are also engraved in full and assigned mainly to the west and south walls; they include some of the most popular scriptures in medieval times, such as the *Shengman jing* 勝鬘經 or *Śrīmālādevī śimhanāda Sūtra* (T. no. 353), the *Visualization Sūtra of Maitreya Bodhisattva in Tuṣita Heaven* (T. no. 452), and the Bodhiruci translation of the *Diamond Sūtra* (T. no. 236). Also notable is the inclusion of texts concerning elements of Buddhist practice such as vows, precepts, gāthā hymns, and lists of Buddhas' names, all of which are presented in excerpted form and are dispersed alongside the main scriptures on three walls (except north).

In addition to the scriptures inside the Leiyin Cave, Jingwan is also believed to have completed the inscribing of two other major texts in their entirety before his death in 639: the *Nirvana Sūtra* (T. no. 375) in 631 and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (T. no. 278) in 634.<sup>39</sup> Taking into consideration the inclusion of the entire *Nirvana Sūtra* (albeit in the Southern version) in cave 7, the above list of Buddhist scriptures from Fangshan readily reminds us of Wofoyuan. The dominant presence of the *Lotus Sūtra* with the colossal nirvana Buddha in cluster I; the *Sūtra of the Names of Buddhas* in cluster II; and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* in cluster XI, all seem to have repeated parts of the content of the Leiyin Cave verbatim. The reappearance of these scriptures in Sichuan proves their continued popularity in other parts of China. It also raises the likelihood that the founders of Wofoyuan knew about Fangshan and sought to imitate it somehow. But most significantly, the indisputable similarities in the selection of scriptures at Fangshan and Wofoyuan points to a shared belief among their respective builders in the preservation of key Mahayana scriptures as a viable way of safeguarding Buddhism from decline or destruction. In Jingwan's case, he had explicitly stated that the project at Fangshan was conceived as a response to the prophecy about the end of Dharma that rapidly took hold of Chinese Buddhist communities during the second half of the sixth century.<sup>40</sup> Although the Sui and Tang courts' renewed interest in Buddhism had calmed much of the initial anxiety and doubt by the early eighth century, the decline prophecy still remained an influential concept in shaping devotees' perceptions of their faith and their role in upholding it. How Xuanying and others at Wofoyuan responded to this challenge will be discussed in greater detail in the final section of this article.

In its original setting, the Leiyin Cave was likely furnished with a host of Buddhist icons at the center of the chamber to complement its scriptural content in the surrounding area. Although the discovery in 1981 of a stone reliquary containing two relic pellets in a shallow pit in the middle of the cave confirms their presence



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Seated Maitreya with two standing bodhisattvas, Central Leigutai Cave. Longmen, late seventh century. Photograph from *Zhongguo shiku: Longmen shiku* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992), 2:pl. 256.

more or less by tradition, the lack of any concrete information on the iconographic identity of the icons and their mode of display makes it difficult to further our examination of the dynamic relationship between pictorial images and inscribed texts within a cave temple setting. To make up for this lack, we may now turn to the Leigutai Central Cave at Longmen, which represents a critical transition in the development of cave temples with stone scriptures. By the end of the seventh century, inscribed texts had been integrated into many cave complexes in China as a regular feature, though the texts assumed a less prominent place than those at Fangshan or other sixth-century sites in the northeast.<sup>41</sup> The change in many ways reflects an attempt at achieving a greater balance in deploying representational media to articulate the overall purpose of the site.

Purportedly the earliest in the group of three caves at the eastern hills of Longmen, the Leigutai Central Cave was part of some large-scale works sponsored by the ruling elite at the site during the Wu Zhou period (690–705). It is a spacious, semi-spherical cave measuring 5.7 meters in height, 6.3 meters in width, and 7.7 meters in depth. Along the back or east wall is a central altar on which a majestic Maitreya Buddha is seated, flanked on each side by a bodhisattva standing on a lotus stem extended from the central throne (fig. 22). The overall decorative program inside the cave is a literal rendition of its name, “The Great Cave of Fifteen-thousand Buddhas.” That is, the interior wall surfaces are profusely covered with small seated Buddha images, whose group identities are conspicuously labeled as “Buddhas of ten directions in the past, present, and future.”<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to this infinitude of Buddha images are a set of twenty-five monk figures representing successive patriarchs in the history of Buddhism since the time of Śākyamuni’s nirvana. They are depicted pacing clockwise along the bottom section of the cave, from the western end of the north wall toward the western end of the south wall. Each is identified by an accompanying cartouche that begins with the name of the patriarch, followed by the corresponding excerpt from the *Fu Fazang yinyuan zhuan* 付法藏因緣傳 translated by Tanyao 曇曜 and Kinkara 吉迦夜 (T. no. 2058).<sup>43</sup> In addition to the excerpted cartouches among the pictorial



images, there are four Buddhist scriptures rendered in direct-inscribing technique like those at Wofoyuan: the Bodhiruci translation of the *Diamond Sutra* (T. no. 236), the *Sutra on the Six Gates of Dhāraṇī* 六門陀羅尼經 (T. no. 1360), Xuanzang's translation of the *Heart Sutra* (T. no. 251), and the *Amitābha Sutra* (T. no. 366).<sup>44</sup> As if to make the physical demarcation clearer, all four scriptures are confined to the lower portion of the front (west) wall, a self-contained space that is separate from the twenty-five patriarchs.

In a recent study of the stone scriptures in Leigutai Central, Wang Zhenguo argues that both the images of the twenty-five patriarchs and the five Buddhist texts represented in the cave were closely associated with the Chan master Shenxiu 神秀. Indeed, the texts in question constituted some of the key scriptures in the canon of what would become the northern school, which acknowledged Shenxiu as one of its patriarchs.<sup>45</sup> Although the great schism that would eventually split Chan into two rival sects had not yet occurred at the time of Leigutai's construction, the interest in rationalizing and representing an unbroken, correct transmission of the dharma from the Buddha Śākyamuni to the present era was already evident. What is of interest here is how this was expressed via the pictorial program at Leigutai Central.

To begin with, the selection of Maitreya Buddha as the principal icon and the presence of the thousand Buddhas motif inside Leigutai Central create a visual continuum that stretches to the very limits of time and space. There, an incessant progression through three distinct stages is presented: from a primordial infinitude of Buddhas, through the historical present marked by the successive patriarchs, to the coming of the Future Buddha. By placing their most cherished teachings in stone-carved format within this continuum, the Chan monks who purportedly initiated Leigutai Central were able to stake their claim to this cosmological time scale. In so doing, they projected their belief system and their own role as its rightful inheritors, as well as its perpetuators in the present and guardians until the coming of the Future Buddha. The strategic positioning of the stone scriptures on the front wall further confirms their crucial role in supporting the patrons' assertion of their ideological position. By virtue of the viewer's bodily movement inside the cave, each visual component therein is activated in accordance with the intended course of viewing. In the process, the themes on the back wall—what the viewer first encounters when entering the cave—symbolically set the overall temporal continuum, with an infinitude of Buddhas marking the past, present, and future. Those on the front wall—what one sees before leaving the cave—offer the viewer a venue to participate through reciting Buddhist scriptures, thereby enabling him or her to fully embrace the cosmic order thus represented.

The use of stone-inscribed scriptures within the overall pictorial program of the Leigutai Central Cave exemplifies a mode of transmitting religious knowledge that impacted the design of Wofoyuan a few decades later. It is one that advocates a legitimate transference of religious authority continuously from one age to another, from one patriarch to the next during the time of the Buddha's absence. This self-reflective, essentially historiographical anxiety about one's place within the greater tradition reminds us of Empress Wu's legitimation campaign, which helped spawn a variety of monumental projects such as the construction of the Heavenly Hall and the great bronze statue on Baisima Slope. Within this context, the selection and layout of motifs in Leigutai Central were not coincidental in an age that was intensely occupied with utilizing material objects and structures to promote self interests.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the program at Leigutai can be seen as an attempt by its monastic makers to imitate the imperial court by advancing their own agenda through a skillful use of representation.

### **An Opposition of Image and Text**

The construction of Wofoyuan in the early eighth century marks a new chapter in the history of cave temples with stone scriptures. As there is no record left behind by the makers or patrons about their intent, we may rely mainly on the material remains in situ as well as the comparative perspectives offered by contemporaneous examples to assess the significance of the site. Sophistication in the selection and configuration of stone scriptures at Wofoyuan reveals the makers' awareness of their predecessors' works in Sichuan and other parts of China. Their active participation ensured the application of an extensive knowledge of the tradition, which was carefully adapted to suit the needs of the project at hand.

Clearly, the design of Wofoyuan built upon the basic premise shared by the three seventh-century sites analyzed above, namely that the medium of stone-inscribed scriptures warranted permanence as much as its production lent orthodoxy to the content and the makers. By inscribing eighteen scriptures in stone, the community in Anyue sought to endorse them as the most important and representative of the Buddha's teachings. The involvement of a monk like Xuanying fits well the pattern of site establishment discussed earlier, as his extensive knowledge of the canon would have ensured a careful, rigorous selection of texts that would become representative of the overall message of the site. What is remarkable about Wofoyuan is that Xuanying and his followers apparently relied on the collective effort of an extensive network of local patrons to carry out this monumental project. In the absence of any single generous yet strong-willed donors, the monastic team would have had more control over the planning, construction, and management of Wofoyuan.

Before turning our attention to the doctrinal content of the scriptural program at Wofoyuan, it is important to consider in more concrete terms its function and purpose. In light of the case of Guanghua Monastery, it is reasonable to extend our earlier finding by arguing that none of the inscribed texts were intended to serve as visual props in public lectures or everyday ritual exercises. This does not deny the fact that a number of the texts inscribed at Wofoyuan do explicitly spell out such popular practices as the chanting of Buddhas' names, seated meditation, and esoteric rituals like *abhiṣeka*. Rather, it is to stress the symbolic nature of these practice-related texts within the primary purpose of the site, namely to preserve the Buddha's teaching in both word and image in a setting that is as primordial and long-lasting as nature itself. Within this schema, the stone scriptures were meant to be seen as much as worshipped by devotees, for they were believed to share the same level of efficacy as those monumental icons nearby in fulfilling the dearest wishes in their hearts. As the monk Sengyi declared in his dedication in cave 66, the *Nirvana Sutra* inscribed inside was made for "veneration forever and ever."<sup>47</sup>

The doctrinal program at Wofoyuan is at once a complex amalgamation of Mahayana ideas typical of medieval Chinese Buddhism, as well as a soteriology formulated with tenable goals and a consistent, rigorous program of guided praxis. As demonstrated earlier, Wofoyuan encompassed key texts from both the Leiyin and Leigutai Central Caves, including the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Names of Buddhas*, the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Sutra of Anitabha*, and the *Heart Sutra*. In lieu of Leiyin's chanting materials or Leigutai's historical accounts, principal scriptures such as the *Nirvana Sutra*, the *Golden Light Sutra*, and the *Sutra of Repaying Kindness* were added to the program along with several popular apocryphal texts. The result was one of the most ambitious scriptural programs ever attempted in stone.

The Wofoyuan program reinterpreted many facets of Northern Dynasties Buddhism within an increasingly sectarian framework that had benefited from a century of intense schematization of Buddhist teachings, better known as the *panjiao* 判教 movement.<sup>48</sup> The *Nirvana* and *Lotus* sutras, once the sine qua non for all educated monks of the Northern Qi (550–77) and Sui (605–18), gradually fell within the purview of a handful of schools by the eighth century. While ideas in core texts like these were further developed with updated commentaries, new lines of thought were launched with texts recently introduced from Central Asia and India. Judging from the type of scriptures included at Wofoyuan, it is clear that the site represented a cautious reinterpretation of the old rather than a daring promulgation of the new. Specifically, while the absence of representative texts from the Huayan, Pure Land, Vinaya, Esoteric, Faxiang, or Chan traditions readily precludes any explicit affiliation with these emerging schools at Wofoyuan, the





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Buddhist scriptures on west wall,  
Scripture Cave. Jinchuanwan,  
Shaanxi, mid-seventh century.  
Photograph by the author.

scriptural program there hints strongly at influences from the Tiantai and Three Levels sects. Their possible involvement at the Sichuan site thus deserves further consideration.

Of the six principal scriptures displayed at Wofoyuan, five of them underline a noticeable leaning toward the Tiantai worldview, including the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Golden Light Sutra*, the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, the *Diamond Sutra*, and key chapters from the *Nirvana Sutra* on the topic of Buddha nature. These texts were the subject of extensive commentaries by Tiantai patriarchs like Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597) and Guanding 灌頂 (561–632), in which the subtle relationships between core ideas were often explained with great intricacy.<sup>49</sup> The collective presence of the scriptures at Wofoyuan attests not only to the widespread popularity that the writings of Tiantai masters enjoyed throughout monastic communities at the time, but also to the kind of encyclopedic, synthetic approach to Buddhism that they advocated. After all, the Wofoyuan program was one of the most wide-ranging in medieval China. That said, we must at the same time be cautious not to characterize the site simply as Tiantai for three reasons. First, there is no documentation that specifically links the Anyue area to the sect, although it is plausible to speculate on the role of the Yangzi River in disseminating Tiantai thought from the Jiangnan area to Sichuan. Second, none of the key Tiantai writings like Zhiyi's *Great Concentration and Insight* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀) or *Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義) were included in the program. The founders of Wofoyuan, it seems, were more interested in monumentalizing the words of the Buddha than those of his human proselytizers. Third and most importantly, the Sichuan site does contain elements from other traditions that in effect render the entire program more complex and heterogeneous in character. The inclusion of representative texts from the Three Levels sect is a case in point.

On the east wall of cave 59 at cluster III are carved four texts, two of which bear clear connections with the teachings of Xinxing 信行 (540–594), founder of the Three Levels sect. The *Excerpts on Meditation Methods as Spoken by the Buddha*

(*Foshuo Chanfa luechu* 佛說禪法略出) is based on the third fascicle of Xuanzang's translation of the *Daśacakra Sutra* (*Daji dizang shilun jing* 大集地藏十輪經, T. no. 411), which is a different version of the same scripture now listed as T. no. 410 in the Taishō canon. The latter was frequently referred to in Three Levels literature, as Xinxing himself is purported to have written two commentaries on this text. *The Essential Secrets of Meditation Sutra* (*Foshuo chanmi yao jing* 佛說禪秘要經, T. no. 613), translated by Kumārajīva, relates various meditation methods that are believed to have had efficacy in alleviating the ills of practitioners in a degenerate age. Not coincidentally, the rhetorical linking of meditational rituals to a timetable of decline is a characteristic feature of Three Levels teaching.<sup>50</sup>

The recent discovery of a scripture cave at Jinchuanwan 金川灣 outside Xi'an, Shaanxi, helps bring the connection with the Three Levels sect at Wofoyuan into focus (fig. 23).<sup>51</sup> There, three texts authored by Xinxing were carved directly onto the interior walls, alongside the *Dafangguang shilun jing* 大方廣十輪經 (T. no. 410), the expanded version of the *Lotus Sutra* (T. no. 264), and the *Diamond Sutra* in their entirety, as well as the *Sutra on the Seven Rosters of Buddhas' Names* (*Qijie foming jing* 七階佛名經, previously extant in Dunhuang manuscripts only) and the *Sutra on Tathagata Preaching to the King of Victorious Army* (*Rulai shijiao shengjunwang jing* 如來示教勝軍王經 (T. no. 515) in excerpted form. The conspicuous presence of the *Lotus Sutra* and the names of Buddhas readily remind us of the Wofoyuan program, prompting us to rethink the extent to which the Three Levels literature was actually encoded at the Sichuan site. The inclusion of Three Levels literature at the site no doubt underscores the undeniable popularity of this controversial sect in medieval Chinese society. But given the repeated persecutions of the Three Levels sect by various imperial regimes throughout the Sui and early Tang, it would have been against the self-interest of local religious leaders like Xuanying to openly endorse an outlawed sect, especially when they were known to have close ties to local officials and wealthy donors in their community.<sup>52</sup>

We may better appreciate the heterogeneous nature of the Wofoyuan scriptural program by turning to the specifics of how it fits within the design of the entire site. To this end, it is crucial to recognize at the outset that the stone scriptures were largely dependent on surrounding pictorial imagery and architectural elements to fully realize their intended functions. Since the site was in essence a natural valley with two sides facing one another, it is instructive to consider the thematics of the scriptural program with this spatial layout in mind. With its twenty-three-meter-long reclining Buddha statue, cluster I on the south cliff is no doubt the most strategic location at Wofoyuan to which all visitors would turn their attention. It is precisely where the *Lotus Sutra* was presented in full beside the colossal image (fig. 24). A locus classicus for Buddhist devotional practice, the Kumārajīva translation





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Caves 1 and 2, cluster I. Wofoyuan, Anyue, Sichuan, first half of the eighth century. Photograph by the author.

provides the most authoritative endorsement of the use of material objects in the worship of the Buddha. By situating a text like this at the grandest section of the site, there was clearly an intention to extend the argument to justify the very existence of the place as well. In this light, the *Lotus Sutra* can be seen as the generative source of Wofoyuan, not unlike the role of the reclining Buddha in defining the parameters of a “situation” to which a “response” was made.

To fully understand how the “response” was construed, it is crucial to see what kind of “situation” the *Lotus Sutra* and the reclining statue collectively sought to evoke. Both rely on the nirvana theme to call attention to the question of survival in an age that lacks the illuminating presence of the Buddha. As the instability inherent in the subject of the nirvana Buddha has already been broached earlier, we may now focus on how the theme figures in the *Lotus Sutra*. In numerous instances throughout the text, the Buddha’s nirvana is utilized to introduce the topic of image-making devotionism, which is typically couched in a chain of conditional statements about cause and effect. Because the profound affairs of the Buddha are preached and revealed in the scripture, those who venerate the scripture in effect pay homage to the Buddha, thereby availing themselves of immeasurable merits.<sup>53</sup> In all similar rhetorical constructs, the phrase “After the Buddha’s nirvana” appears with such consistency that it takes on the function of a temporal marker bracketing the timeframe within which this particular form of veneration would be most efficacious. The time in question is precisely when the Buddha is absent from the human realm.

At Wofoyuan, the enlargement of the nirvana theme to colossal proportions seems to have followed a similar logic. Looming majestically on the north cliff, the reclining statue marked the beginning of an era without the presence of the Buddha in the human realm. The implied progression of time was not given a clearly defined end, for the Future Buddha was not hinted at in pictorial imagery or inscribed scriptures anywhere at the site. Without this marker of finality for one



age or for the beginning of another, an impression of timelessness thus emerged. This pictorial expression of permanence was developed on the south cliff with four additional principal Buddhist scriptures from the medieval canon.

Just as the reclining statue and the *Lotus Sutra* collectively set the rhetorical parameters underlining the survival of Buddhism in a time without the Buddha's presence, the five clusters on the opposite side offered a response in stone scripture that seeks to rationalize and uphold the permanence of the Buddhist faith. The basic tenor of the argument is set with the *Sutra of the Names of Buddhas* in cluster II, which advocates the infinitude of Buddhas in the cosmos by simply enumerating their names. The inclusion of the scripture underscores the belief that every realm with sentient beings was, is, and will be graced by a continuous succession of Buddhas. The same theme is further echoed by the Three Buddhas motif depicted in the central preaching assemblage in the cluster. The immutability of this truth is then reinforced in the next two clusters, in which extensive passages from the *Nirvana Sutra* are found. Indeed, the complete inscription of the first four chapters in caves 59 and 66 cannot be a coincidence; this scripture had been hailed as the most important text in medieval China to explicate and endorse the permanence of the Buddhist faith. As the Sui-dynasty Tiantai master Guanding described in his influential exegesis on the same text, the very survival of Buddhism depends on the *Nirvana Sutra*: "If this scripture is presently available, it means that the Buddhist dharma is present as well. If this scripture is destroyed, it simply means that the Buddhist dharma is annihilated."<sup>54</sup>

The doctrinal core of the *Nirvana Sutra* is articulated in three major themes throughout. Not surprisingly, the first theme pertains to the permanence of the Buddha's body, which is described as adamant and indestructible. In addition to the entire second chapter devoted to the topic, the theme appears again in a new guise in parts of the fourth chapter on Tathāgata-dhatu, in which the crucial connection between the Buddha and nirvana is broached in a range of explanations with vivid metaphors. What emerges is a fourfold definition of nirvana as constancy, happiness, selfhood, and purity, a definition that constitutes the second major theme in the *Nirvana Sutra*.<sup>55</sup> These four aspects of nirvana turn out to be another argument for the permanence of the Buddhist faith, as each comes to signify the respective notions of the dharmakāya, nirvana, Buddhahood, and the correct dharma, all of which are accepted as immutable in the Buddhist worldview. In making the associations explicit, the scripture aims to mitigate the seeming contradiction between the permanence of the Buddha's body and his current absence due to his entry into nirvana. More importantly, the stage is set for one of the most powerful expositions on the universality of Buddha nature in all sentient beings, the third and most influential theme in the *Nirvana Sutra*. This in

effect brings full circle the first theme about the Buddha's permanent, indestructible body by extending its benefits to all beings. Although the stone scripture at Wofoyuan does not present a full version of this argument, it does contain the crucial fourth chapter on Tathāgata-dhatu in its entirety, which presents the most complete discussion of the basic principles.<sup>56</sup>

Many of the ideas from the *Nirvana Sutra* are repeated or strengthened by the other principal scriptures at Wofoyuan. On the topic of the Buddha's permanent body, for example, the second chapter from the *Golden Light Sutra* provides another exposition in terms of the Tathāgata's immeasurable lifespan.<sup>57</sup> The *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, one of the most beloved texts in medieval China, serves as a perfect counterpoint to the *Nirvana Sutra* by expanding on two key themes from the latter. On the one hand, the bodhisattva ideal, so fully embodied in the figure of the great householder, echoes the universality of Buddha nature in all beings. On the other hand, the extensive discussion on nonduality throughout the debate between Vimalakīrti and Mañjuśrī in some ways complements the discussion of nirvana and the Buddha in the *Nirvana Sutra* with greater flair and drama. Lastly, the *Sutra of Repaying Kindness*, which is an apocryphal scripture that incorporates many of the parables from the *Nirvana Sutra*, takes on issues of duality and nonduality with a more socially oriented perspective. To critics who accuse Buddhist monasticism of being a detriment to the welfare of family and the notion of filial piety in particular, the scripture counters the charges by explaining the Buddha's decision to embark on a spiritual quest as a form of repaying the kindness of his parents.<sup>58</sup>

The repeated emphasis on the notion of permanence throughout the scriptural program of Wofoyuan marked a new development in the eighth century. As mentioned earlier, stone scripture as a material form arose from the onset of End of Dharma thinking in the second half of the sixth century, and the conception of Wofoyuan subscribed to the general premise that underlined this novel category of material objects. What made the Sichuan site distinct, then, was a growing sense of certainty about the continuation of Buddhism that came to supersede the pessimism at the outset. To take the *Nirvana Sutra* as an example, it appeared frequently in cave temple sites in the sixth century primarily for its close association with End of Dharma thinking, which some of its passages had inspired. At the aforementioned Dazusheng Cave at Lingquan Monastery, for instance, a hymn based on the scripture was carved directly onto the outer surface of the south-facing façade along with several other texts closely related to the decline prophecy, in particular the *Candragarbha Sutra* 月藏分 from the *Mahāsamnipāta Sutra* 大集經 (T. no. 397) and the *Mahāmāyā Sutra* 摩訶摩耶經 (T. no. 383, carved inside the cave near the entrance frame).<sup>59</sup> These three texts discuss at great length the

timetable of decline as well as the various social ills that marked the coming of the inevitable end. When the *Nirvana Sutra* reappeared at Wofoyuan more than a century later, however, the once intimate link with the End of Dharma thinking was supplanted by a rather different interpretation. It was now the text's comprehensive upholding of the core of Buddha's teachings that was featured center-stage. This change in symbolic value manifests most clearly in the absence of any End-of-Dharma-related texts and any references to the topic in the texts included at the site.

To conclude, it is fitting to reflect on some of the broader cultural implications behind Wofoyuan as a cave temple complex. The Anyue site had instantiated and at the same time outdone some of the expectations that Buddhist devotees in medieval China had for this unique cultural space. Cave temples and urban monasteries shared many similarities in doctrinal teaching, monastic organization, patronage network, iconographic setup of worship space, and artistic conventions. While both architectural types also included Buddhist scriptures on premise, the practice of carving them onto mountain cliffs prompts us to rethink the more subtle differences in attitude and religious aspiration that had turned an ordinary practice of collecting and reading books into something extraordinary. The allure of cave temples as the ideal setting for this new phenomenon seems to lie in the mutual opportunity that nature and devotion had afforded for each other. Our examples from Sichuan have shown how natural environment had played such a critical role in shaping the very practice and meaning of devotion, and conversely how religious beliefs had changed the face of the land.

At Wofoyuan, by inscribing key Buddhist scriptures into the very fabrics of the surrounding landscape along with colossal statuary, the builders had made their message loud and clear: the Dharma was as much an integral part of nature as it was part of human history. This material expression of permanence embodied a growing sense of optimism about the present that likely germinated out of greater political, social, and economic developments of the Sichuan region in the early Tang period. Indeed, the fact that Wofoyuan was patronized not by the imperial court or the regional government but mainly by local devotees testifies to the tremendous determination of the founders as much as to the wealth of the community to which they belonged.<sup>60</sup> In moving forward with their monumental plans, the founders of the Anyue site had set an important precedent for later projects at Beishan 北山 and Baodingshan 寶頂山 in the neighboring county of Dazu, thus establishing a tradition of building cave temples with stone scriptures in Sichuan that lasted over centuries afterward.

In pursuing a concrete solution to ensure the permanence of the Buddhist faith, the founders of Wofoyuan had also demonstrated the viability of a cave tem-



ple site to turn self-consciousness into self-confidence, to make heterodoxy into orthodoxy. The determination to convince their audience of the correctness in their viewpoints not only helped cast the initial self-doubt aside, but also spawned a kind of idealism that came to serve as the driving force in propelling ambitious projects forward for years, decades, or centuries. In this light, it thus can be said that Wofoyuan necessarily existed on two planes, straddling imagination and reality. First, it took the form of a utopia in the imagination of its makers, a mythical nonplace where all ideals would be materialized and all dissatisfactions dissolved. Second, the site was a realizable blueprint that held out hope and reward to those who were determined to move forward with their undertaking. When finished, it became a devotional ground where practitioners came together to work toward the realization of yet another utopian vision, this time a practicable soteriology that sought to facilitate and guarantee passage into a realm of bliss beyond this world. This never-ending pursuit of utopian vision registered the underlying fascination that kept luring believers back to the site, or to the idea of beginning another at some other location.

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## NOTES

### ABBREVIATION

- T. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (The Tripitaka in Chinese), ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高順次朗 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭, 100 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–34).

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1. I have discussed the earlier phase of development in my “Transmitting Buddhism to a Future Age: The Leiyin Cave at Fangshan and Cave Temples with Stone Scriptures in Sixth-Century China,” an article forthcoming from *Archives of Asian Art*. This is the latest of a growing number of studies on the subject that have appeared in recent years. See, for example, Yan Juanying [Yen, Chüan-ying] 顏娟英, “Bei Qi changuanku de tuxiang kao—cong Xiaonanhai shiku dao Xiangtangshan shiku” 北齊禪觀窟的圖像考—從小南海石窟到響堂山石窟 [A study on the pictorial programs in Northern Qi cave

temples built for meditation—From Xiaonanhai to Xiangtangshan], *Tōhō gakuho* 70 (1998): 375–440; Li Yuqun 李裕群, “Yecheng diqu shiku yu kejing” 郾城地區石窟與刻經 [Cave temples and inscribed scriptures in the Yecheng Area], *Kaogu xuebao* 4 (1997): 443–79; Yu-min Lee, “Preserving the Dharma in Word and Image: Sixth-Century Buddhist Thought, Practice, and Art at Ta-chu-sheng Grotto,” parts 1 and 2, trans. Donald Brix, *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 34, nos. 2 and 3 (1999); Robert E. Harrist, Jr., *The Landscape of Words: Stone Inscriptions from Early and Medieval China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008); and Katherine R. Tsang, “Monumentalization of Buddhist Texts in the Northern Qi Dynasty: The Engraving of Sutras in Stone at the Xiangtangshan Caves and Other Sites in the Sixth Century,” *Artibus Asiae* 56, nos. 3 and 4 (1996): 233–61.

2. The standard edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon in the eighth century was typically kept in the imperial library in the capital. There had been a number of catalogues commissioned by various emperors to document such scriptural collections from the sixth to eighth centuries. Perhaps the most representative was *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 [Catalogue of Buddhist teachings from the Kaiyuan reign] by Zhisheng 智昇, from which today’s standard edition in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (1924–34) was derived.
3. The other notable specimens of colossal reclining Buddhas from the eighth century are located at Mogao Caves of Dunhuang, respectively caves 148 and 158. In Sichuan, nirvana Buddhas were not a common subject either, as there were only two other previous examples prior to Wofoyuan, namely cave 4 and

- niche 495 at Qianfoya in Guangyuan.
4. For other interpretations of the reclining statue and its iconography, see Hu Wenhe 胡文和, "Sichuan moyu zaoxiang zhong de niepan bian" 四川摩崖造像中的涅槃變 [Nirvana images among cliff carvings in Sichuan], *Kaogu* 9 (1989): 850–55; and Angela Falco Howard, "Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten," *Bulletin of Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm* 60 (1988): 39–43.
  5. This area was known as Guangtong Lane 光通里 of Guangde Village 廣德鄉 in Song times. See the stele text in cave 81 and an inscription in cave 116, both dated to the first half of the twelfth century. The first is transcribed in full (under cave 85) in Cao Dan 曹丹, "Anyue Wofoyuan fo kejing yu tiji" 安岳臥佛院佛刻經與題記 [Buddhist stone scriptures and donor inscriptions at Wofoyuan of Anyue], *Sichuan wenwu* 2 (1990): 52; the second is in Li Liang 李良 and Deng Zhijin 鄧之金, "Anyue Wofoyuan kuqun zongmu" 安岳臥佛院窟群總目 [Cave contents of Wofoyuan in Anyue], *Sichuan wenwu* 4 (1997): 45.
  6. In *Anyue xian zhi* 安岳縣志 [Gazette of Anyue] dated 1786, which was based on two earlier versions from 1608 and 1716 respectively, the entry on Wofoyuan relates that the site was already in a dilapidated state by the late Ming if not earlier. See *Anyue xianzhi* [Qianlong edition], reprinted by Hainan chubanshe 208 (2001): 73.
  7. These initial reports include: Li Liang and Deng Zhijin, "Anyue Wofoyuan kuqun zongmu"; Cao Dan, "Anyue Wofoyuan wofo kejing yu tiji"; Peng Jiasheng 彭家勝, "Sichuan Anyue Wofoyuan diaocha" 四川安岳臥佛院調查 [An investigation of Wofoyuan in Anyue, Sichuan], *Wenwu* 8 (1988): 1–13; and Hu Wenhe 胡文和 and Li Guanzhi 李官智, "Anyue Wofokou Tang dai shijing" 安岳臥佛溝唐代石經 [Tang-dynasty stone scriptures at Wofokou in Anyue], *Sichuan wenwu* 2 (1986): 20–25.
  8. The current reconfiguration was based on field work conducted at Wofoyuan during the summer of 2005. My objectives were to generate a more accurate site plan and to refine the identification of all inscribed scriptures. Currently, Lei Yuhua of Chengdu Archaeological Institute and Wei Zhengzhong (Giuseppe Vignato) of Beijing University are preparing a major archaeological report on Wofoyuan. I would like to thank Dr. Lei for sharing some of her findings with me. Our respective mapping schemes agree in principle.
  9. The numbering system in this paper follows the one in Li Liang and Deng Zhijin, "Anyue Wofoyuan kuqun zongmu." To mark the difference between a cave and an open niche, the numbered work in question is preceded either by the word "cave" or "niche."
  10. Fu Chengjin 傅成金, "Anyue shike zhi Xuanying kao" 安岳石刻之玄應考 [On the monk Xuanying according to stone carvings from Anyue], *Sichuan wenwu* 3 (1991): 48–50.
  11. According to a stele text titled "Preface to Tang Meditation Master Receiving the Vows," Qianfozhai was founded in 722 under the generous sponsorship of Wei Zhong 韋忠, the prefect of Puzhou. A transcription of the text can be found in Hu Wenhe 胡文和, *Sichuan dao jiao, fo jiao shiku yishu* 四川道教佛教石窟藝術 [The art of Daoist and Buddhist cave temples in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1994), 70–71.
  12. For a general introduction, see Angela F. Howard et al., *Chinese Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 201–206, 264–73, 315–29; and Howard, "Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan."
  13. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the same workshops were active at both Wofoyuan and Qianfozhai. Stylistic comparisons between the two sites are further complicated by the fact that much of Qianfozhai was heavily altered in later times, as many Tang niches were entirely recarved and repainted.
  14. Hu Wenhe, *Sichuan dao jiao, fo jiao shiku yishu*, 71.
  15. See note 6.
  16. This moment of revival is vividly recorded in a stele text dated 1103 in cave 81. See transcriptions in Cao Dao, "Anyue Wofoyuan wofo kejing yu tiji," 52; and Li Liang and Deng Zhijin, "Anyue Wofoyuan kuqun zongmu," 44.
  17. In addition to niches 46 and 64, the halo can be found at the following locations: niches 1 and 2; the seated Buddhas respectively in niches 30 and 32; niche 53 behind each of the three seated Buddhas; the main seated Buddhas in niches 70 and 72; and niche 82. Given the consistent use of the halo throughout the site, it is likely that the halo is present at the last cluster (nos. 109–25) as well, even though it is currently inaccessible.
  18. For cluster I, I believe that only the following parts date from the eighth century: the reclining Buddha statue, the half-naked guardian at the Buddha's feet, the large-size seated figure at the Buddha's abdomen, the scene with twenty-one figures located above the upper body of the statue, and the three figures in and around the niche directly to the right of the Buddha's head. After a close examination of the three uneven rows of the images located below the Buddha's body, I have determined on the basis of their carving style and the haphazard nature of their arrangement and iconography that they were added to the cluster at a considerably later date.



Another important piece of evidence in support of this conjecture is the location of various strut holes throughout this area, suggesting that these images would have been covered by a structure built in front. Unfortunately, there is no dated evidence as to when and for what purpose they were added. According to an inscription dated 1134, both the reclining statue and the seated figure in front were repaired at that time. It is possible that the project also encompassed a series of niches added to the lower section of cluster I.

19. See Li Chenyan 李琛妍 [Sonya Lee], "Sichuan da fo zhi dao" 四川大佛之道 [The pathway of the great Buddhas in Sichuan], in 2005 nian Chongqing Dazu shike guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwen ji 2005年重慶大足石刻國際學術研討會論文集 (Proceedings from the 2005 International Conference on Stone Carvings of Dazu in Chongqing), ed. Art Museum of Dazu Rock Carvings of Chongqing (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007), 540–47.
20. Nowadays, Wofoyuan can be accessed either from the south by boat (via Bamiao Village) or from the north on foot through some small hills (via the town of Dongchan). According to the elderly villagers who live near the site, visitors used to come from the west via Dongchan in the early part of the twentieth century.
21. As stated in note 18, because the structure's base level would have likely blocked the entire section below from view, this in turn implies that the three rows of images presently located below the Buddha statue were carved later.
22. See Zhou Junqi 周俊麒, "Da xiang foge yanjiu" 大像佛閣研究 [On the pavilion of the great Buddha statue] *Sichuan wenwu* 5 (1995): 44–50. The description by Fan Chengda 范成大 is recorded in

his *Wuchuan lu* 吳船錄 [Records from boats of Wu], which is cited in Zhou's study. See also Yuan Jinquan 袁金泉, "Leshan dafo de yanjiu yu baohu" 樂山大佛的研究與保護 [Research on the great Buddha at Leshan and its preservation], *Sichuan wenwu* 1 (2005): 90–95.

23. Hu Wenhe and Li Guanzhi, "Silun Anyue Wofogou Tang dai shijing," 22.
24. Except for a short text named *Tan sanzang jing* 檀三藏經 in cave 73, the identity of which still awaits further investigation, the identification of most scriptures at Wofoyuan has been ascertained.
25. The *Sutra on the Profound Kindness of Parents* at Wofoyuan is probably the earliest known version of its kind in China. The current edition in the *Taishō* is collated on the basis of two Dunhuang manuscripts, namely S. 2084 and S. 190. See *Daizōkyō zenkaisetsu daijiten* 大藏經全解說大事典 [Dictionary on the Chinese tripitaka], comp. Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 et al. (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1998), 838.
26. In an older edition compiled by Yancong 彥琮, some 5072 fascicles of texts in 2,113 parts were recorded; in the new edition, an addition of 1,513 fascicles in 125 parts were appended, the majority of which pertained to new translations by Xuanzang. See the entry in *Daizōkyō senkaisetsu daijiten*, 631.
27. The texts included in the catalogue are: *Nirvana Sutra*, *Diamond Sutra*, *Sutra of the Names of Buddhas*, *Sutra on Repaying Kindness*, *Abhiṣeka Sutra*, and *Golden Light Sutra*. The two listed in the third fascicle are the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*.
28. Despite the rather poor state of preservation in clusters VI and VII, it is very likely that the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* and *Sutra of Repaying Kindness* were once inscribed in their entirety in these two clusters. For

example, cave 85 in cluster VI was inscribed with the first nine fascicles of *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, whereas the neighboring cave 83 likely contained the remaining tenth to fourteenth fascicles. There, inscribed texts were discovered on the west wall, but the characters have become illegible due to severe weathering.

29. Transcriptions of the text can be found in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文, *juan* 201; *Chongxiu Pengxian zhi* 重修彭縣志, *juan* 11; and most recently in *Bashu fojiao beiwen jicheng* 巴蜀佛教碑文集成, ed. Long Xianzhao 龍顯昭 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2004), 11–13. The biography of Daoyin in Zanning's *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (T.50: 716c–717b) is an abridged version based on this stele text by Li Yan.
30. The Chinese text for this passage is: 縱洪瀾下注, 巨火上焚, 俾此靈文, 永傳遐劫. 豈直迷生之類, 睹之而發心; 後學之徒, 詳之而悟道. *Bashu fojiao beiwen jicheng*, 12.
31. Transcriptions of the text can be found in *Wang Zian jizhu* 王子安集注, *juan* 16; *Quan Tang wen*, *juan* 183; and *Sichuan tongzhi* 四川通志, *juan* 4; *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, *juan* 850; and most recently in *Bashu fojiao beiwen jicheng*, 19–21.
32. The stone scriptures from Guan County are now preserved in the Guan County Cultural Relics Office at Dujiangyan. See Hu Wenhe 胡文和, "Guanxian Lingyanshan Tang dai shijing" 灌縣靈岩山唐代石經 [Tang-dynasty stone scripture at Lingyanshan of Guan County], *Sichuan wenwu* 2 (1984): 33–35.
33. Lingyu's biography is recorded in *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 by Daoxuan 道宣, *juan* 10, T.50: 495b–498a. The passage concerning the monk's patronage of the Dazhusheng Cave and subsequent visits to the site by younger monks is from T.50:

- 497b. For further discussions on the connections of Lingyu's teachings to the pictorial program at Dazhusheng, see Yu-min Lee, "Preserving the Dharma in Word and Image."
34. The quote is from Robert F. Campany, "Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of Sūtra Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1991): 54. John Kieschnick also presents a similar view regarding Buddhist scriptures, arguing that the sacred power of these texts derived partially from the belief that one could gain religious merits through reading, reciting, copying, and printing Buddhist scriptures. See Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 172–76.
  35. For a recent discussion of the religious use of writing in early China, see Mark E. Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 241–86. John Kieschnick attempts to link the earlier Chinese traditions with the Buddhist attitudes toward books; see Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 164–68.
  36. There is a large body of literature on Fangshan, as it has been studied by scholars of various countries for generations. See Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, "Bōzan Ungo-ji to sekkei daizokyo" 房山雲居寺と石經大藏經 [Yunju Monastery at Fangshan and the Tripitaka in stone scriptures], in *Chūgoku kinsei Bukkyō shi no shimondai* [Various questions concerning the history of Chinese Buddhism in recent times], Tsukamoto Zenryū chosakushū (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1975), 5:291–610; Lothar Ledderose, "Ein Programm für den Weltuntergang: Die Steinerne Bibliothek eines Kosters bei Peking," *Heidelberger Jahrbucher* 36 (1992): 15–33; Ledderose, "Changing the Audience: A Pivotal Period in the Great Sutra Carving Project at Cloud Dwelling Monastery near Beijing," in *Religion and Chinese Society*, Vol. 1: *Ancient and Medieval China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press; Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), 385–409; and my "Transmitting Buddhism to a Future Age."
  37. The princess's involvement at Fangshan has been documented in a number of inscriptions, including "An Afterward for a Stone Pagoda at the Hilltop" 山頂石浮圖後記 (dated 730) and "A Record for the Stone Scriptures Hall at Zhuolu Mountain" 涿鹿山石經堂記 (dated 809), both of which are collected in *Fangshan shijing tiji huibian* 房山石經題記彙編 [Collected inscriptions from stone scriptures of Fangshan] (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1987), 11–12, 15–16. For a discussion of the topic, see Tsukamoto, "Bōzan," 449–52. The production of stone scriptures at Fangshan had continued incessantly after Jingwan's death, but all of his followers prior to the time of Xuanfa apparently focused on completing the projects that had already been initiated by the master. Tsukamoto argues that the modest scale of activities during this period was the result of local patronage and implicitly the lack of incentives from imperial donors ("Bōzan," 446–47).
  38. For a more in-depth discussion of the scriptures in the Leiyin Cave, see Kiriya Seiichi 桐谷征一, "Bōzan Raiondō sekkei kō 房山石經考 [A study on the stone scriptures from Fangshan]," in *Nomura Yōshō hakase koki kinen ronshū* (Bukkyōshi bukkyōgaku ronshū) (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1987), 125–26.
  39. See Ledderose, "Changing the Audience," 389–90.
  40. See the dedicatory inscription now located above the entrance to Cave Leiyin (no. 5, dated 628), transcribed in *Fangshan shijing tiji huibian*, 1.
  41. See my "Transmitting Buddhism to a Future Age."
  42. The six rectangular labels that are positioned alongside the circumference of the large lotus flower capping the ceiling respectively read: "the upper direction, south, north, northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest." For a more detailed discussion of this motif, see Sofukawa Hiroshi 曾布川寛, "Ryūmon sekkutsu ni okeru Tōdai zōzō no kenkyū" 龍門石窟における唐代造像の研究 [A study on the Tang dynasty image-making activities at Longmen Caves], *Tōhō gakuho* 東方学報 60 (1988): 334–42.
  43. It is important to note that the *Fu Fazang yinyuan zhuan* names only twenty-two patriarchs, beginning with Śākyamuni through Mahākāśyapa to Shizi biqiu. The two additional ones found in the Leigutai Central are Motianti 摩田提 (no. 3) and Yeche 夜奢 (no. 23). For a transcription of the twenty-four extant excerpts in Leigutai Central Cave, see Wang Zhenguo 王振國, "Longmen shiku ji Yubei sanchu moya kejing" 龍門石窟及豫北三處摩崖刻經 [Cliff-carved Buddhist scriptures at Longmen Caves and three other sites in Yubei], a paper presented at the Culture of Stone Scriptures Conference at Yunju Monastery, Fangshan, August 8–10, 2002.
  44. See Wang Zhenguo, "Longmen shiku ji Yubei sanqu moya kejing."
  45. *Ibid.*
  46. To affirm her political legitimacy, Empress Wu was responsible for rendering a number of traditional

- political symbolisms into innovative material forms. The adaptation of the “sacred tower” into a Buddhist pagoda with a colossal Buddha statue inside at the Bright Hall complex is a case in point.
47. The Chinese text for this donor cartouche is as follows: 普州安岳縣沙門僧義造涅槃經一龕永為供養. See Li Liang and Deng Zhijin, “Anyue Wofoyuan kuqun zonglu,” 43.
  48. For a useful introduction to this complex topic, see Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbei chao fojiaoshi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 [A history of Buddhism in Han, Wei, Jin, and the Northern and Southern Dynasties] (reprint, Taipei: Luotuo chubanshe, 1976), 834–55.
  49. For a discussion of Zhiyi’s writings, see Dong Ping 董平, *Tiantai zong yanjiu* 天台宗研究 [Studies on the Tiantai sect] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 15–27.
  50. The timetable of decline is one of the key features in Chinese Buddhist eschatological thinking during the medieval period. See a related discussion in Jamie Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood: The Rise and Fall of a Chinese Heresy* (Hawai’i: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 123–48.
  51. See Zhang Zong 張總 and Wang Baoping 王保平, “Shaanxi Chunhua Jinchuanwan Sanjiejiao kejing shiku” 陝西淳化金川灣三階教刻經石窟 [A cave temple inscribed with scriptures associated with the Three Levels sect at Jinchuanwan of Chunhua, Shaanxi], *Wenwu* 5 (2003): 65–74.
  52. Xinxing’s school was banned for the first time in 600 under Emperor Wendi of Sui, then again in 699 under Empress Wu, and the last time in 725 under Emperor Xuanzong of Tang. For a more detailed discussion, see Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion*, 195–222.
  53. See, for example, the passage in chapter twenty-one in the *Lotus Sutra* (T.9:52a): “For this reason, after the extinction of the Thus Come One, you all must single-mindedly receive and keep, read and recite, interpret and copy, and as you preach, so practice [the *Lotus Sutra*].” Quoted from Leon Hurvitz’s translation in *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (the Lotus Sutra)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 288.
  54. *Da ban niepan jing shu* 大般涅槃經疏, by Guanding 灌頂, T. 38: 41c.
  55. The four elements are translated into Chinese as *chang* 常, *le* 樂, *wo* 我, and *jing* 淨, or in Sanskrit respectively as *nityatva*, *sukha*, *ātma*, and *śubha*. For a discussion of the scripture’s doctrinal content, see Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, *Nehangyō no kenkyū* 涅槃經の研究 [A study on the Nirvana Sutra] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1997), 60–81 (on the Hinayana tradition) and 155–236 (on the Mahayana).
  56. A significant part of the argument concerning the possible Buddhahood for *icchantika* or the thoroughly amoral appears later in the *Nirvana Sutra* but was not carved at Wofoyuan.
  57. It is also worth noting that the two shorter texts based on excerpts from *Dajī dizang shilun jing* 大集地藏十輪經 and *Foshuo channui yao jing* 佛說禪秘要經, both of which were inscribed immediately following the end of the fourth fascicle of the *Nirvana Sutra* in cave 59, are about the permanence of the Buddha’s body as well.
  58. The inclusion of the *Sutra on Repaying Kindness* at Wofoyuan was somewhat of an oddity. Except in cave 4 at Fangshan, the text had rarely appeared at cave temple sites prior to the eighth century. Its appearance in Sichuan might have to do with its growing popularity in the early Tang. Xuanzang himself is known to have presented a copy of the scripture to Emperor Gaozong in 656, when the crown prince turned a month old. See *Da Tang Da Ciensi sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, by Huiban and Yanzong, T.50: 272b.
  59. The identification of the passage was first made by Tokiwa Daijō and Sekino Tadashi in *Shina bukkyō shiseki* 支那仏教史跡 [Buddhist monuments in China] (Tokyo: Bukkyo shiseki kenkyukai, 1919–31), 5:190–91.
  60. Not coincidentally, the area between the Min and Pei Rivers—Chengdu and 200 km to its east—is known to have experienced significant economic growth throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, thanks largely to the flourishing agriculture and handicraft industries in the area, as well as a much-expanded transportation system that connected Sichuan with the Tang capitals by both land and river routes. For a discussion on the economy of Tang Sichuan, see Meng Mo 孟默 et al., *Sichuan gudai shigao* 四川古代史稿 [Historical notes on pre-modern Sichuan] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1989), 191–205.







## GENUINE OR FORGED

*Methods of Identifying Forgeries of Chinese Buddhist Sculptures*

1  
 Tablet depicting a triad  
 Spurious inscription dated 601  
 Stone  
 Height 29.5 cm, width 18 cm  
 Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
 Lang Freer, F1907.505

**Abstract**

Beginning in the nineteenth century, many forgeries, along with genuine works, entered the collections in Japan, Europe, and North America. The creators of these forgeries were not artists trained in Buddhist artistic traditions, and they did not fully understand traditional Chinese Buddhist art. However, their works reveal some of the methods that the Chinese used to make forgeries over the centuries. Comparing the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of early forgeries with that of genuine pieces, this essay discusses both the motivation for and the standard methods of forging Chinese Buddhist sculptures. These methods address pieces with elements that do not follow the iconographic “rules” in Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art, works with two or more different styles that are not contemporary, pieces with spurious archaic inscriptions, and forged works with a folk aesthetic style. These methods are still useful for identifying most contemporary forged pieces produced from 1990s onward, except for the exact high-quality imitations of genuine images. This research will help scholars and collectors identify forged Chinese Buddhist sculptures in certain collections, avoid acquiring them, and prevent them from being such a source of confusion for scholars doing research in the future.

BEGINNING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, numerous Chinese antiques, including Buddhist sculptures, entered U.S., Japanese, and European collections. Many of these pieces are high-quality works that are important for scholars’ research. Along with genuine works, however, many forgeries also entered foreign collections by way of dealers in China and exporters to Europe and North America. The creators of these forgeries were not artists trained in Buddhist artistic traditions, and they did not fully understand the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of traditional Chinese Buddhist art. Consequently, most Buddhist believers would not consider some of the resulting works beautiful and/or effective. In many cases, the forged pieces reveal some of the methods that Chinese creators used to make forgeries over the centuries.

Compared with other areas of Chinese art such as painting and bronzes, research on the authentication of Chinese Buddhist sculpture is scant.<sup>1</sup> During the late Qing period (1644–1911), Lu Zengxiang 陆增祥 (1816–1882) identified nine forged Buddhist sculptures by analyzing the calligraphic style of the inscriptions in an effort to find mistakes in rendering the characters representing the two parts of the Chinese sixty year cycle.<sup>2</sup> This was a popular means for identifying steles and Buddhist sculptures with inscriptions that was used in Chinese epigraphic studies and in the West.<sup>3</sup> The contemporary scholars Li Jingjie 李静杰 and Wang



Quanli 王全利 analyzed four pieces in the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing and discussed three ways of authenticating Buddhist images. They considered stylistic characteristics, regional peculiarities, and working procedures.<sup>4</sup> Analyzing working procedures is a good authentication method but is only applicable to bronze images. Some issues involving stylistic characteristics and regional peculiarities also need clarifying. In the book *Foxiang de jiancang yu bianwei* 佛像的鑒藏與辨偽 [On appreciation, collection, and identification of forgeries of Buddhist images], Jin Shen 金申 lists many examples of forged Buddhist sculptures. His discussion relates four telltale errors commonly seen in the production of forgeries: combining characteristics from different periods, combining pieces from different works, adding forged inscriptions to genuine pieces, and imitating genuine pieces.<sup>5</sup> These characteristics are no doubt useful in identifying forged Buddhist sculptures, but additional criteria are still needed.

In order to consider additional criteria, it is important to understand both the motivation for and the standard methods of forging Chinese Buddhist sculptures. I will address the motivation using some Chinese texts from the periods during which early forgeries were produced. Regarding the standard methods, I will compare the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of forgeries and genuine pieces as I discuss four ways that forgers in ancient and modern China created their objects. These include pieces that do not follow the iconographic “rules,” works that contain two or more noncontemporary styles, pieces with spurious archaic inscriptions, and items with an aesthetically folk style. The second method refers to the four methods that Jin Shen identified, but it is necessary to extend that discussion here. In this case, “if proof were given, there would then be any aesthetic difference” between a deceptive forgery and an original or genuine piece,<sup>6</sup> helping us to set up the four ways to identify forged Chinese Buddhist sculptures. The final section will briefly discuss how to deal with the high-quality contemporary forgeries produced from the 1990s onward.

I will concentrate on the Freer’s collection not because it has an usually large number of forgeries nor because there has been less curatorial awareness of problems there, but because the Freer is the first museum in the United States that gave me access to slowly and carefully examine its entire holdings of Buddhist sculpture.<sup>7</sup> Charles Lang Freer (1856–1919), the founder of the Freer Gallery of Art, visited China four times in 1895, 1907, 1909, and 1910–11, investigating many Chinese historical sites such as the famous Gongxian and Longmen cave temples in Henan province. This gave him abundant knowledge about Chinese antiques and helped him to amass a high-quality collection that was acquired from China or Asian art dealers in America.<sup>8</sup> However, Freer was not a scholar trained in Asian art history. Among the more than 330 Chinese Buddhist sculptures in his collection, I

estimate that about ten percent are forgeries. At the time of my investigation, the Freer curators had detected some, but not all, of the forgeries.<sup>9</sup> The Freer collection represents other problems as well; for example there are pieces without noted provenance in the collection.

The purpose of making forgeries is mainly for profit. All kinds of forgeries foil scholars' research and connoisseurs' judgments because they "loosen our hold on reality, deform and falsify our understanding of the past."<sup>10</sup> My research discusses the methods for making forgeries of Chinese Buddhist sculpture in order to help identify them in certain collections and to help people avoid buying them in the future. In addition, I hope that my findings will prevent these forgeries from being such a source of confusion for scholars doing research in the future.

### **Motivation for Making Forged Chinese Buddhist Sculptures**

What is a forgery? Not all pieces created as copies, reproductions, or imitations of ancient pieces are truly forgeries, only those claimed to be genuine and intended to deceive people (usually potential buyers). Several scholars have attempted to set parameters for the definition what a forgery is. According to Samuel Goudsmit, the primary purpose and the "motivation of most forgeries is to deceive buyers into paying more for an object than it is worth."<sup>11</sup> Michael Wreen claimed that the definition of a forgery is "not genuine but that which is represented as genuine with the intention to deceive."<sup>12</sup> Monroe C. Beardsley further suggests that a forged work of art "must bear some similarity to some work of art which is not forged."<sup>13</sup> We can use this standard to define all kinds of forged works, including bronzes, ceramics, paintings, and sculptures. W. E. Kennick, also clarified the relationship between forgeries, fakes, and copies, stating "[a] forged or a fraudulent N is a fake N, but a fake N is not necessarily a forgery or fraudulent N.... Some forgeries are copies; but many forgeries are not."<sup>14</sup> Based on this statement, "forgery" has a different meaning from "fake": a fake can be a copy, a reproduction, or an imitation; it will become a forgery when it is used for deception.<sup>15</sup> Most of the pieces I discuss below are associated with deception and taking advantage of those who bought them.

Imitation and creation were the most popular ways to create forged Buddhist sculptures in China. According to Shen C. Y. Fu and Jan Stuart, in Chinese art there are three major categories of copies: a close copy (*lin* 臨) without the aid of tracing or mechanical means; a free-hand imitation (*fang* 仿) with a personal interpretation; and a creative reinterpretation (*zao* 造) that imitates the style of an ancient master in order to produce a "new" work.<sup>16</sup> The producers of forged Chinese Buddhist sculptures practiced all three. The second and third methods have been used from ancient times until today. The artists who work for modern muse-

ums prefer to use the first method to make an exact copy of a certain work. All of the forged pieces discussed below belong to the *fang* and *zao* categories. In the last section, I will mention contemporary forgeries that are close copies.

Epigraphers inspired the creation of forged antiques in the Song (960–1279) through Qing periods because they liked to collect rubbings and antique objects for their research and avocation.<sup>17</sup> Craftsmen therefore created forgeries to cater to these scholars' collections.<sup>18</sup> Because interest in epigraphy was just beginning, Northern Song (960–1127) scholars suspected the authenticity of only a few pieces. The well-known Northern Song scholar Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), for example, was suspicious of two pieces in his collection. Regarding an inscription on an iron Maitreya figure, he wrote:

The eulogy for the iron Maitreya image from Shibi monastery 石壁寺 in Jiaocheng county, Taiyuan city, was written by Gao Shi 高氏, the wife of Fang Lin 房璘, Canjun 參軍, [in the twenty-ninth year of Kaiyuan (741)]. . . . Gao's stone-carved calligraphy existed today are just this eulogy and the one for Mr. An Meizheng 安公美政 [An Tingjian 安庭堅]. The brush-strokes of the two steles are totally dissimilar, so [they] were not written by the same person. [I] suspect [that the persons] imitated the different [original ones], but [they] should not be so different. In addition, [I] suspect that some troublemakers borrowed [Gao's] name and wanted to claim [their piece as] a miracle.

太原府交城縣石壁寺鐵彌勒像頌者，參軍房璘妻高氏書。... 然其所書刻石存於今者，惟是頌與安公美政頌爾。二碑筆畫字体遠不相類，殆非一人之書。疑摹刻不同，亦不應相遠如此。又疑好事者寓名以為奇也。<sup>19</sup>

It is possible that these two pieces were written by the same person because a calligrapher could have used different styles of calligraphy to write different pieces. The important information Ouyang gave us is the identification of the troublemakers (Ch. *haoshi zhe* 好事者). They could have been people who wanted to copy some antique pieces in order to create a better reputation for their new work, or they may have been craftsmen who wanted to sell their forged pieces or rubbings to scholars of epigraphy. We can see that in the Northern Song period, Ouyang encountered some reproductions or forgeries of antique pieces by “troublemakers.”

Some records from the late Qing period provide a historical background for creation of forged Buddhist sculptures. In *Yushi* 語石 [Talking stone] (completed in 1901), the Qing dynasty epigrapher, Ye Changchi 葉昌熾 (1847–1917), discussed



the antique trade and markets associated with epigraphy in a small town, Wei 濰 (in present-day Weifang City in Shandong province). Ye observed that Wei was a small town by the seashore and that persons selling antiquities filled the market. There were not only many steles and plaques, but also many items including Qin period (221–207 BCE) gold and Han period (206 BCE–220 CE) jade. All antique dealers who came from the right side of the mountain (Shandong) to sell antiquities in the capital (Beijing) were Wei people.<sup>20</sup> In terms of making forgeries of Buddhist stone sculptures, Ye stated that “about half of the Wei period (420–556) (Buddhist) images belong to Qi 齊 (Shandong). However, forgeries are mixed in among them [魏造像半為齊物. 然假托者即出於其間].”<sup>21</sup>

Ye introduced the sources for some Buddhist sculptures and explained how the makers of spurious images fabricated archaic pieces and sold them to scholars of epigraphy:

The image [commissioned] by Shi Huiying 釋慧影 also is a Liang period [502–57] sculpture that came from *Shu* [Sichuan].<sup>22</sup> I met *Shu* people bringing several dozen Liang images, but all of them were forgeries. [These forgeries were] claimed to be the stone [image commissioned by Shi Huiying] ... . During the Daoguang reign [1821–50], Li Baotai 李寶臺 of Shaanxi selected some old bronze images without inscriptions and carved something on their backs in order to sell [them]. People who were interested in antiquity scrambled for these “old” works. ... Buddhist stone images can be often found in obsolete monasteries in desolate mountains. Unprincipled monks sometimes brought [them] for seeking food (to sell for food). Some dealers brought [them] to the capital and cut off some heads of the sculptures. [Regarding] the dharma [Buddhas or bodhisattvas] bodies without inscriptions, someone brought only bases or one part of damaged niches. However, the forgeries are found right among these pieces.

釋慧影造象，亦梁刻，自蜀中来。余曾見蜀人攜梁造象數十通，皆贗，托此石。... 道光中，陝人李寶臺取舊銅象無字者，剗其背以炫售，好古者爭購之。... 石象，荒山廢剎中往往有之。衲子之無行者輒持以求食。碑估攜至都下，或鑿其首，法身無字者，或僅攜其座，或殘龕一角，而偽造者即雜出於其間。<sup>23</sup>

Along with Li Baotai, Ye introduced other forgers who were active during the late Qing period. He said that Pan Wenqin 潘文勤 was a careful connoisseur; however, his *Pangxi* 滂喜 stone collection was infiltrated with pieces by the forger Li Qiu 梨邱. Another forger, Yin Zhunian 尹祝年 of Zhucheng 諸城 in Shandong was

familiar with antiquity. His son, Yin Boyuan 尹伯淵, was skillful in carving seal script. The piece of the eulogy, supposedly written by the Han period (206 BCE–220 CE) figure Zhu Bo 朱博, was actually made by Yin and his son. Ye also mentioned that Boyuan died as a result of his bad behavior, so his fate could be a warning for others to abstain from forgery.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Ye states that *Baoyiyuan Conggao* 鮑臆園叢稿 [Articles written at the Baoyi Garden] included a volume of rubbings of carved images. The volume mentions that the stone image—the inscription of which was believed to have been commissioned by the nun Rujing 如靜 in the seventh year of Tianbao (556) in the Northern Qi period—is an example of a forgery. Ye's contemporary figure Wang Liansheng 王廉生 knew the forger's name; the piece was actually the bottom of a house pillar. Ye indicated that Li Baotai forged all of the image rubbings in the collection of Ye's Ping'an Guan 平安館 [The studio of peace] that claimed to be commissioned by Sima Zhizhong 司馬治中 in the fifth year of Tianbao (554), Zhang Zuoqing 張佐清 in the first year of Kaihuang (581), Wu Wende 吳文得 in the second year of Kaihuang (582), Zhu Jianzhong 朱建忠 in the first year of Daye (605), and Jiang Yongxi 姜永錫 and Jiang Changnian 姜長年 in the first year of Changqing (821). The rubbing of an inscription that indicated its commission by Bai Sengyou 白僧佑 of Danyang 丹陽, Daliang 大梁, actually was a new creation carved on an uninscribed genuine image from the Yonghui reign (650–55) of the early Tang period. This piece, along with the rubbing of the inscription that claimed to be commissioned by Su Jian 蘇檢 in the first year of Tianfu (901), were both forged by Zhu Gu 朱賈 (or dealer Zhu). Ye also stated that he would like to list these forgers to warn future addicts of antiquities.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, whether or not some pieces discussed here came from the workshops of the above forgers is unknown.

In addition to epigraphy, another factor that inspired forgers to manufacture antiquities was demand from the West. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Western museum curators, scholars, collectors, and others were interested in Chinese culture and ancient art. This demand and desire encouraged scholars to explore Chinese historical sites and antiquities, and dealers and collectors sought to acquire ancient Chinese objects. Numerous archaeological sites (especially many famous cave temples) were looted and large numbers of masterpieces entered Western collections.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the Chinese antique business flourished, and antique markets in big cities were established and were filled with works from all over China. In the meantime, Chinese craftsmen copied ancient pieces and forged “new” archaic works for the export market.

The antique markets and trade, therefore, were the source for importing both genuine pieces and forgeries into the United States. According to Freer's diary, he purchased antiques in the markets of Chinese cities such as Hong Kong, Shanghai,

Qingdao, Tianjin, Beijing, Kaifeng, Luoyang, Hangzhou, and Mukden (Shenyang). Records indicate that he visited some famous Chinese collectors and viewed their collections, among them Duan Fang 端方 (1861–1911) in Tianjin and Pang Yuanji 龐元濟 (1864–1949) in Shanghai.<sup>27</sup> However, neither Freer's diary nor the curatorial files of the Freer collection provide any information that would enable us to trace the forgeries back to the workshops of the fabricators, some of which were probably identified by Ye Changchi.<sup>28</sup> Other collectors and dealers from the West used the same sources, both reliable and questionable, to purchase genuine pieces and forgeries until 1949.<sup>29</sup>

### Following Iconographic “Rules” or Not

Chinese artists created Buddhist sculptures based on “rules” that set up iconographies for deities from sutras and artistic traditions. In Chinese Buddhist art, each type of figure, such as Buddhas, disciples, bodhisattvas, guardian kings, strongmen (Ch. *lishi* 力士), and apsaras, has its own unique iconographic characteristics. Some of those characteristics were stipulated in sutras, such as the Buddha's thirty-two laksanas (the physical marks) [*Sanshier xiang* 三十二相] and the eighty physical characteristics [*Bashisuihao* 八十隨好].<sup>30</sup> Chinese artists also crafted their works based on Buddhist artistic traditions from each period; therefore, iconographic “rules” were altered in different periods. Creators of forgeries, unfamiliar with these conventions, sometimes “disobeyed” them and created images from their own imagination. It is easy to spot these kinds of forgeries if we focus on aspects related to this type of problem: confusing the principles of sutras, composition, costumes of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and ornamentation of bodhisattvas.

### The Principles of Sutras

Some images disobey the principles put forth in Buddhist sutras. For instance, the stone triad in figure 1 (p. 78) has an inscription that claims to be from the first year of Renshou (601) in the Sui period (581–618). This inscription mentions that the donor commissioned three marble images, but does not mention any specific subject. The main figure wears a Buddha's robe, his right hand forms the *abhaya* mudra (without fear), and his left hand forms a boon-granting mudra. These gestures were often seen in standing Buddha images.<sup>31</sup> The creator of this image probably wanted to carve a standing Buddha as the main figure of the triad. However, its main figure has a bald head without an *ushnisa*—one of Buddha's major characteristics.<sup>32</sup> This figure, therefore, does not correspond to the rules stated in the sutras regarding the features of a Buddha.





2

2

Triad of pensive bodhisattva  
Spurious inscription dated 556  
Marble  
Height 42 cm, width 21.2 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1909.281

### Compositions of Images

Two pieces illustrate the phenomenon of misunderstanding traditional compositional formulas. One from the Freer collection is a marble pensive Guanyin that imitates Northern Qi style and is associated with Quyang County (a place located in Hebei province that was well known for the manufacture of marble sculptures). There are two engraved trees on the back of the Guanyin and eight images on the front of the trees: three seated Buddha images, two apsaras, one standing bodhisattva, and two attendant bodhisattvas riding on animals. This composition has not been found on any other sculpture of the period. In addition, the front of the base of the sculpture has three small bodhisattvas: one seated in the middle and two standing on the sides. The two standing bodhisattvas replaced the two guardians who are usually located in these positions. From the end of the Northern Wei (420–534) through the Northern Qi (550–77) periods, guardian images wore the same costume as bodhisattvas, but the appearances of the faces and bodies of the two types of images were totally different.<sup>33</sup> This sort of guardian was often carved on both sides of the bases of stone figures in the second half of the sixth century. Forgers like the creators of the above-mentioned image misunderstood the difference between bodhisattvas and guardians. We can see a similar phenomenon on another marble pensive bodhisattva from the Freer that is carved in Northern Qi style (fig. 2). An incense burner, two squat lions, and two standing bodhisattvas are on the front of the base. The maker of this image obviously made the same type of mistake as was made in the previous piece.<sup>34</sup> We can identify another inscribed marble triad (F1911.414; mentioned below) from the Freer by examining its simi-



3

3  
Maitreya  
Gilt bronze  
Idemitsu Museum, Japan  
From Matsubara Saburō, *Chūgoku  
Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zuhanden*  
*Ichū: Gishin Nanbokuchō zenki*  
(Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan,  
1995), pl 72ab.

lar composition, because there are two small standing bodhisattvas (rather than guardians) on the side of the base of the image, imitating Northern Qi style.

### Costumes of Figures

An inscribed gilt bronze Maitreya in the collection of the Idemitsu Museum 出光美術館 in Japan is a good example of inaccurate costumes that were carved on forged Chinese Buddhist sculptures (fig. 3). This figure is dated to the eighth year of Taihe (484) in the Northern Wei period. The inscription mentions that it was commissioned by Li Riguang 李日光 who lived in Fagan 發幹 County (in present-day southwest Tangyi 堂邑 County in Shandong Province). The figure has an *ushnisa* on the top of his head and his hair is short. He wears a Buddha's robe with his right shoulder exposed, and his right hand is in the *abhaya* mudra, like the historical Buddha. At the same time, the figure wears some garments suitable for a bodhisattva, including a long skirt and a long scarf that wraps around his body, but the style of the drapery of the middle skirt mimics the drapery style often seen in a Buddha's robe. This Maitreya figure obviously combines the iconographic characteristics of both Buddha and bodhisattva. According to Buddhist scripture and Chinese artistic tradition, Maitreya is the future Buddha, but it always appears as a cross-ankled bodhisattva during the Northern Dynasties period (420–581).<sup>35</sup> The creator of this work was unaware of the iconographic and stylistic characteristics associated with the period. He also mixed the features of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, a clear indication that the piece is a forgery. In spite of this evidence, the piece has been identified as a genuine and is cited in some academic publications as such.<sup>36</sup>



4

4  
Bodhisattva  
Spurious inscription dated 574  
Marble  
Height 45.7 cm, width 24.7 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles Lang  
Freer, F1909.284



5

5  
Maidservant  
Northern Song period, inscription dated  
1087  
Clay  
Height 158 cm  
Shengmu Hall, Jinci Shrine, Taiyuan,  
Shanxi  
From *Zhongguo meishu quanji bianji*  
*weiyuanhui*, ed., *Zhongguo meishu*  
*quanji-Diaosu bian 5- Wudai Song*  
*Diaosu*, 87.



6

6  
Bodhisattva  
Northern Wei period, early 6th century  
Sandstone  
Cave 1, Gongxian Grottoes, Gongyi,  
Henan  
From *Henansheng wenwu yanjiusuo*, ed.,  
*Zhongguo shiku-Gongxian shikusi*, 69.

A marble bodhisattva figure (fig. 4) inscribed in the fifth year of Wuping (574) during the Northern Qi period also features an inaccurate costume. The style and medium of the image is similar to works made in Quyang County. The bodhisattva's face looks like a common woman and does not express any spirituality. He wears a robe with a crossing collar and large sleeves similar to the costume of common women in the Song and Ming dynasties (1368–1644) (fig. 5). Furthermore, part of his robe drapes over his head like a white-robed Guanyin (Skt. Pandaravasini), a type of Guanyin popular after the ninth century.<sup>37</sup> He also wears a long scarf that crosses through a ring in the front of his body, representing a popular accessory of bodhisattva images during the Liang and Northern Wei period (fig. 6). The appearance of this bodhisattva shows the creator's misunderstanding of the general iconographic characteristics required for bodhisattva images in the relevant dynasties.

### Ornamentation of Bodhisattvas

Unusual ornamentation on bodhisattvas represents another clue for identifying forgeries. Matsubara Saburō's 松原三郎 *Chūgoku Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron* 中國佛教雕刻史論 [Discussing the history of Chinese Buddhist sculptures] is a well-known reference book that includes many masterpieces of Chinese Buddhist sculpture. The author, however, introduced two gilt bronze Guanyin statues from private collections as genuine pieces. The inscription of one dates it to the first year of Xiping (516) during the Northern Wei; the inscribed donor's last name is Wang 王 (fig. 7). The second statue is dated to the fifth year of Zhengguang (524), also during the Northern Wei; the inscribed donor is the wife of Hu Ban 胡絆.<sup>38</sup> The two figures appear very similar and they seem to be made by the same artist. They imitate the style of late Northern Wei bodhisattvas with elongated bodies





7

7  
Guanyin  
Inscription dated 516  
Gilt bronze  
Private collection  
From Matsubara Saburō, *Chūgoku  
Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zuohanhen Ichi:  
Gishin Nanbokuchō zenki*, pl 140a.



8

8  
Stele depicting a Buddha triad  
Limestone  
Height 30.5 cm, width 15.5 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles Lang  
Freer, F1912.82



9

9  
Bodhisattva  
Northern Wei period, early 6th century  
Sandstone  
Cave 4, Gongxian Grottoes, Gongyi,  
Henan  
From Henansheng wenwu yanjiusuo,  
ed., *Zhongguo shiku-Gongxian shikusi*,  
165.

and crossed scarves, but instead of wearing crowns, which were popular on late Northern Wei bodhisattvas, their hair is arranged in buns. This feature is a common characteristic of bodhisattvas from the Tang period (618–907).<sup>39</sup>

A Buddhist stele with carved figures (fig. 8) is another example of disagreement with the ornamentation of genuine bodhisattvas. A seated Buddha flanked by two standing attendant bodhisattvas is on the front of the piece.<sup>40</sup> Although the scarves cover the bodies of the two attendants, we cannot see how the scarves were worn. Genuine bodhisattva figures from the fifth and sixth centuries have crossing scarves (some of them threaded through a ring) on the front of their bodies (fig. 9 and 6). In addition, bodhisattvas from the sixth and seventh centuries usually have scarves that drape from the shoulders down both sides of the body.<sup>41</sup> The scarves of the bodhisattvas from this stele do not correspond to the arrangement of similar figures from the fifth through the seventh centuries. Both attendant bodhisattvas on this stele, furthermore, have one tuft of hair on the tops of their heads. This does not correspond to the iconography of bodhisattvas from the second half of the sixth century, because these figures do not wear crowns. The creator of the two bodhisattvas on the stele also carved flame halos on the top of their heads instead of behind their heads, which is a standard feature of Buddhist figures. If the author of this piece had been familiar with conventional bodhisattva images from the Northern Dynasties, he would not have made these kinds of mistakes.

Because many forgeries do not follow iconographic “rules,” they can be identified through an examination of inconsistent or incorrect iconography. Familiarization with sutra descriptions of the features of major Buddhist deities is essential for determining whether or not a particular piece is a forgery. In addition, Chinese artists followed certain artistic traditions in their creation of images, therefore a study of the traditional compositions, costumes, and ornamentation of Bud-



10

10  
Buddha triad  
With spurious inscription dated 541  
Bronze  
Height 16.7 cm  
Shanghai Museum, Shanghai  
From Ji Chongjian, *Foxiang*, 39.

dhas and bodhisattvas throughout the history of Chinese Buddhist art is necessary for understanding the iconographic “rules” that most genuine pieces follow. Elements that do not conform to the standards of authentic Buddhist art suggest that a certain piece is most likely a forgery.

### Combining Different Styles that Are Not Contemporary

A certain Buddhist image might have one or two iconographic or stylistic characteristics that belong to one or two successive periods, because a later piece could inherit the features of earlier works from consecutive periods. An early Tang Buddhist sculpture, for example, could have stylistic characteristics of both the early Tang and Sui or Sui and Northern Zhou periods. On the other hand, according to Chinese Buddhist art tradition, some styles from different periods could not be combined in the same piece because they are from periods that are too far apart. A genuine Song period Buddhist sculpture, for example, would not include some iconographic and stylistic characteristics from the Northern Wei dynasty. This phenomenon is based on a chronology of the features of Chinese Buddhist images established by artists through dynasties. This means that artists developed a system whereby they used only styles from dynasties that followed each other chronologically or were adjacent to each other in time. Forgers, however, often did not understand the chronology. Although some elements of forged pieces did derive from authentic models, the forgers did not fully understand the tradition and combined genuine elements that are not coinstantaneous. The resulting pieces have combinations of elements that do not correspond to genuine works.

A good example of one such forgery is a bronze Buddha triad (fig. 10). Its inscription includes a date corresponding to the seventh year of Datong (541) in the Liang





11

Pagoda

With spurious inscription dated 588

Stone

Foundation of Zhengdan Wenjiao

From Guoli Lishi Bowuguan, *Fodiao Zhimei*:

*Beichao Fojiao Shidiao Yishu* (Taipei: Guoli lishi bowuguan, 1997), pl 69.

period. The style of the main Buddha, however, follows characteristics of the Tang period: he has a full face, a strong body, a plump chest and a slender waist.<sup>42</sup> Only the two attendant bodhisattvas have thin bodies with long scarves crossed in front of their abdomens—all of which are typical styles of the Liang and late Northern Wei periods (fig. 9). This combination of styles is problematic because the Liang (or Northern Wei) and Tang style figures could not be contemporary according to extant works. Possibly, the forger wanted to produce a spurious Liang piece but mistakenly carved a Tang-style Buddha figure.<sup>43</sup>

Another example is a small stone pagoda claimed to be made for the benefit of monk Qiagong 洽公 (Master Puhui 普惠) in the collection of the Foundation of Zhengdan Wenjiao 震旦文教 [Culture and education of China] in Taipei (fig. 11).<sup>44</sup> The inscription on this piece claims that it was made in the eighth year of Kaihuang (588) during the Sui dynasty. The three-plaquet crowns of the standing bodhisattvas carved on the surface of the pagoda imitate late Northern Dynasties or Sui style. The scarves they wear, however, are twisted in front of their abdomens; this mode of scarves in bodhisattva images is absent in other works from any period, including both the Northern Dynasties and the Sui. The main Buddha, furthermore, wears a broad robe with his chest largely exposed; this robe mode is a stylistic characteristic prevalent only in the late Tang or post-Tang periods (after 907). As discussed above, based on extant works, stylistic characteristics from the Northern Dynasties (or Sui) and post-Tang periods could not be combined in one piece. The most obvious evidence of the spurious nature of this piece is its inscription: *Foding Zunsheng Datuoluoni Jingchuang* 佛頂尊勝大陀羅尼經幢 [The great honored and victorious Dharani sutra pillar of Buddha's usnisa]. According to Chinese Buddhist history, *Foding Zunsheng Datuoluoni Jing* was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese during the early Tang period. Creating dharani sutra pillars gained popularity after the translation of the sutra.<sup>45</sup> It is unlikely that this kind of pillar was actually completed in the Sui period.

Some pieces in the Freer collection claim to be from the Northern Dynasties period but use the styles of the Tang or post-Tang periods (after 618). One piece features water moon Guanyin with two attendant disciples and two flanking bodhisattvas that are executed with slender bodies and clothing typical of Tang dynasty bodhisattvas (fig. 12). Water moon Guanyin was a popular subject in the Song and post-Song periods (after 960).<sup>46</sup> The inscription on the base, unfortunately, asserts that this Guanyin assemblage was made in the second year of Yan-chang (513) in the Northern Wei. Although there is a possibility that the inscription was carved in a later period after the completion of the piece (see discussion below), the typical Song or post-Song water moon Guanyin of the period suggests that the main figure and his attendants are not engraved in genuine works.





12

Stele with five figures  
With spurious inscription dated 513  
Limestone  
Height 47.5 cm, width 27 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Acquired under the  
guidance of the Carl Whiting Bishop  
expedition, SC-C-37

The above forgeries demonstrate two possibilities with regard to dating. First, the date corresponding to the latest style that can be observed in a piece is probably close to the time of the actual creation of the work. This is presumably true when the piece has a mixture of styles, some of which are poorly executed and/or anachronistic. These kinds of forgeries were produced by relatively inexperienced craftsmen who merely wanted to forge an “antique” but mistakenly used contemporary style. Regarding the above three examples, the second and the third objects were possibly made during the Song based on the latest styles they featured, but it is unclear whether the first piece, with Tang style, was produced in the Tang. As discussed in the first section, epigraphers first inspired the creation of forged antiques in the Song; therefore, a Tang style forged image could not have been made in the Tang. This relates to the second issue in terms of dating. Some forgeries may have been made in later periods—even later than the latest style evident in the object, because certain craftsmen did not fully understand the development of Chinese Buddhist art history and the stylistic characteristics of each period. The three images discussed above were possibly made in the post-Song period, perhaps the Ming or Qing periods; forgers regarded all Wei, Tang, and Song stylistic features as antique and paid no attention to their differences. Therefore, it was easy for them to make these kinds of mistakes when they attempted to reproduce a certain antique by using a style that was earlier than that of their own period. They did not know that combining certain styles would make the piece inauthentic and easily spotted as a forgery in later times.

### Carving Spurious Archaic Inscriptions

Another way to identify a forgery is to examine whether or not its inscription matches the iconographic and stylistic characteristics represented on its figures. An anachronistic feature is a common phenomenon on a forged piece. In certain later dynasties, artists often inherited or followed the styles of earlier periods in creating their new works. Thus many Buddhist cave temple sculptures from the Eastern and Western Wei periods (534–56) have features characteristic of the earlier late Northern Wei period. Early pieces, however, cannot logically exhibit features of a later style, since artists of earlier periods could not see into the future and be familiar with styles of a later dynasty and incorporate them into their work. Many forgeries disobey this fact with spurious inscriptions claiming a date that is too early to be contemporary with a period style that the pieces portray. In examining whether these spurious inscriptions were carved on genuine objects or forgeries, it is useful to consider the two ways in which forged pieces disobey the rules of Buddhism or artistic traditions of Chinese Buddhist art, as I

discussed previously. In addition, familiarity with famous inscriptions makes it easy to determine the authenticity of inscriptions, because some forgers imitated renowned inscriptions in making their fabrications. The following section will discuss the issues involved in determining the authenticity of pieces by investigating their inscriptions, including inscriptions carved on genuine and forged pieces, and by examining the features of images.

### Genuine Pieces with Spurious Archaic Inscriptions

According to a Chinese text, some forgers carved archaic inscriptions on genuine antique Buddhist sculptures in order to sell them easily. In *Yushi*, after discussing the antique trade and markets in Shandong province, Ye Changchi described how forgers engraved archaic inscriptions on uninscribed genuine pieces:

For the old stone Buddhas with no inscriptions, someone carved the backs or niches. All the inscriptions with dates [that they carved] can be confused with genuine [pieces] .... During the Daoguang reign [1821–50], Li Baotai 李寶臺 of Shaanxi selected some old bronze images without inscriptions and carved something on their backs in order to sell [them]. People who were interested in antiquity scrambled for these “old” works.

古石佛無字者，或鐫其背，或鑿其龕，年月文字，皆能亂真。... 道光中，陝人李寶臺取舊銅象無字者，剗其背以炫售，好古者爭購之。<sup>47</sup>

Regarding the motivation for adding forged inscriptions to ancient genuine pieces, Ye stated:

[People] have believed that it is important [to acquire a piece] with an unbroken inscription, even if the antique ware was broken. Therefore, bronze images about one *cun* 寸 high (3.33 cm) also were often forged with re-carved [inscriptions on them].

以古器虽破闕，無伤以款識為重。因之寸許銅造像亦率遭鐫刻作偽。<sup>48</sup>

The practice of carving spurious dated inscriptions on undated images can be seen in a piece from the collection of the Qinglong Monastery 青龍寺 in Xi'an, Shaanxi. It is a typical Tang-style image featuring a Buddha figure seated in a lotus posture. But the inscription on its back indicates that the figure is Maitreya, made in the second year of Xiaochang (526) in the Northern Wei period.<sup>49</sup> It is not likely that an image with Tang stylistic characteristics was made in the Northern Wei.

Northern Wei Maitreya figures, in addition, were usually represented as cross-ankled bodhisattvas instead of as Buddha figures seated in a lotus posture. Thus it is possible that some later period “troublemakers” carved the dated inscription.

A bronze image (fig. 13) is another example of a work that has been updated since its original casting. The front relief of the image depicts a standing bodhisattva in a dress and style similar to some clay standing bodhisattvas produced in the first half of the fifth century in cave 169 of Bingling si 炳靈寺 grottoes, Yongjing, Gansu province, which appear genuine and of high quality.<sup>50</sup> On the back of the mandorla of this bronze, however, is a linear carved standing bodhisattva with a long scarf crossing in front of its body that imitates the elongated stylistic characteristics of the late Northern Wei period (493–534). The carving on the back is of poor quality and has a peculiar appearance: the figure’s face is mangled, his left arm is abnormally long, and his right hand unnaturally grips a bottle. The inscription on the base states:

On the nineteenth day of the fourth lunar month in the third year of Xinghe [541] [in the Eastern Wei period (534–49)], Liu Fu 劉扶 of Raoyang 饒陽 county, Boling 博陵 state, [one illegible character] commissioned an image of Guan 觀 for his deceased elevated parents and then for [his] brothers, himself and his wife, his male and female relatives.

興和三年四月十九日，博陵郡饒陽縣劉扶上為忘父母，後為兄弟及己身夫妻男女伯年，口造觀像一區。

In this inscription, the creator made two mistakes: he carved *Wang* 亡 [deceased] as *Wang* 忘 [forgetting]—both words have the same pronunciation but different tones and meanings—and he skipped one character (*Yin* 音) of the name of Guanyin 觀音 bodhisattva.

Some sculptors of genuine pieces also made similar mistakes on inscriptions, but the two stylistic characteristics represented on the front and back of this image could not be contemporary. Extant Chinese sculptures represent the stylistic characteristics of images with a powerful and strong body of middle Northern Wei style, which extended through the periods of emperors Xiaowen (r. 471–99) and Xuanwu (r. 500–15). By the end of the Northern Wei, the middle Northern Wei style was mostly replaced by the thin and elongated style that spread from south China, which was under the influence of the *Han* 漢 people. Buddhist images in the Eastern Wei period also followed the elongated style of the late Northern Wei. In addition, one cannot find any examples from the Northern dynasties period that contain a linear carved standing bodhisattva image extending his right hand





13

13

Bodhisattva  
With spurious inscription dated 541  
Bronze  
Height 17.3 cm, width 7.2 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1911.129

to hold a flask, like the bodhisattva on the back of this image. All of these factors strongly suggest that this piece includes forged elements. It is possible that the original piece was a relief of a standing bodhisattva made before 515. In a later period, a fabricator carved a linear standing bodhisattva image on the back of the mandorla and an inscription on the back and sides of the base. Unfortunately, this bodhisattva figure has been referred to several times by scholars as a genuine work in their research regarding Chinese Buddhist sculpture.<sup>51</sup>

### Forged Pieces with Spurious Archaic Inscriptions

The above motivation stimulated forgers to intentionally carve spurious inscriptions on their works. The preceding discussion revealed that forgers of Buddhist sculptures disregarded the basic chronology of Chinese Buddhist art, and their works often have readily identifiable anachronistic features. Their efforts to recreate archaic-style pieces with imitated archaic inscriptions usually include elements from much later periods. We can determine whether the inscription is a forgery and whether it is carved on a spurious piece by examining its anachronistic features. A marble triad that includes a main bodhisattva and two assistant bodhisattvas and was discovered by the Linyi Civic Museum in Shandong Province has similar problems. All three figures wear late Northern Wei style clothing with long scarves crossed through a ring in the front of their bodies. The inscription on the piece claims that it was commissioned by Zhou Jicai 周記才 and his brother in the first year of Taihe (477) in the Northern Wei period (386–534).<sup>52</sup> As the preceding discussion indicated, this type of costume emerged in the north because of influence from the south during the time of Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–99), who began his political and cultural reforms in the thirteenth year of Taihe (489) in the



14

14

Buddha

With spurious inscription dated 494

Bronze

Height 26 cm

Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles

Lang Freer, F1911.139

Northern Wei period. Artists in north China were probably not familiar with this kind of costume before 489. In addition, the two assistant bodhisattvas have Tang-style slender bodies and tall buns on the top of their heads. These anachronistic features suggest that this piece includes elements that are not contemporary, and one can be fairly certain it is a forgery with a spurious inscription.

A gilt bronze image of a pair of seated Buddhas (supposedly Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna) from a collection in Belgium has an inscription dated in the second year of Shengui (519) in the Northern Wei. The two Buddhas, however, wear two types of Indian style robes—a robe baring the right shoulder and a robe covering both shoulders—that were popular in the middle Northern Wei period. An exposed right shoulder on a Buddha figure was not seen in 519 because the change of costumes in Buddha images from Indian style to *Han* 漢 Chinese style had already been completed. This *Han*-style Buddha's robe is in *Baoyibodai* mode: a robe covering both shoulders but revealing another robe underneath, and a belt tying the inner robe above the waist. The dress of the donor images on the base, moreover, is not in the style of the *Xianbei* 鮮卑 or *Han* that were popular on Buddhist images during the middle or late Northern Wei periods.<sup>53</sup>

### Imitating Famous Inscriptions

One easy way to identify a forgery with a spurious inscription is to check the content of the inscription, because many forgeries imitate famous ancient inscriptions. As Stuart Fleming has suggested, some forgeries “designed to fit in with genuine documentary evidence include some remarkable wholesale inventions of

a complete, spurious artistic style.<sup>54</sup> We can observe the same phenomenon with Chinese Buddhist sculptures, and two pieces in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art are excellent examples. A Sui- or early Tang-style bronze seated Buddha (fig. 14) with a flat usnisa and a thin body has an inscription on the base that states:

On new moon eleventh day of the seventh lunar month in the eighteenth year of Taihe (494) [in the Northern Wei], Zhang Yuanzu張元祖, Bunianlang步輦郎, commissioned one image for the peaceful lives of [his] parents and family, and [he hopes] all sentient beings share this blessing.  
太和十八年七月朔十一日,步輦郎張元祖造像一軀,為父母居家眷屬平安,一切眾生普同其福。

This is an obvious forged inscription because the forger imitates one of the famous twenty inscriptions carved during the Northern Wei period at Longmen cave temples, Luoyang, Henan Province. Both the genuine and forged inscriptions contain the same official title and name of Zhang Yuanzu. The content of the original, located on the north wall of Guyang Cave 古陽洞 in Longmen, reads:

In the twentieth year of Taihe (496) [in the Northern Wei], Zhang Yuanzu, Bunianlang, unluckily was dead. [His] wife Yifu 一弗 commissioned one image for [him], [and she] wishes [her] deceased husband to be reborn in the Buddhist kingdom.

太和廿年,步輦郎張元祖不幸喪亡,妻一弗為造像一區,  
願令亡夫直生佛國。<sup>55</sup>

The imitation of famous inscriptions is related to the popularity of epigraphy among statesmen and scholars who collected antique works and rubbings of inscriptions and carvings. By the Northern Song period, some Northern Wei inscriptions at the Longmen cave temples were already well known and recorded in Chinese epigraphic literature. Collectors hoped to obtain rubbings for their collections to admire aesthetically and to use in their textual research. The Yifu inscription was well known and marketable, therefore it became a chief candidate for forgery. The author of the bronze seated Buddha in the Freer obviously imitated Yifu's inscription but wrongly used the name, Zhang Yuanzu, Yifu's deceased husband, as the donor in this forgery. In addition, this bronze Buddha shows a piece of fabric wrapping its waist from right to left side and covering its thighs. This feature, which is not found on genuine Buddhas, also indicates that the spurious inscription is carved on a forged image.<sup>56</sup>





15

15  
Buddha triad  
With spurious inscription dated 486  
Marble  
Height 57.3 cm, width 27 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1911.414



16

16  
Stele depicting Guanyin  
With spurious inscription dated 543  
Height 20.5 cm, width 11.9cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1913.36

Another example at the Freer of a forged piece with a spurious inscription is a marble image (fig. 15) with an inscription carved on its back:

In the tenth year of Taihe (486), Zhang Yuanxing張元興, Bunianlang, unfortunately died. [His] wife, Yifu一弗, commissioned an image for [him], wishing [her] deceased husband to be reborn in the Buddhist kingdom.

太和十年，步輦郎張元興不幸喪亡，妻一弗為造像一區，願令亡夫直生佛國。

This inscription also imitates Yifu's original text, but the carver changed the date and the first name of the deceased beneficiary. In terms of representation, this image is executed in the style of the Northern Qi period (not the Northern Wei) because the bodhisattvas from this work feature columnar-style bodies. Also, the sculptor mistakenly carved one standing bodhisattva on both sides of the base instead of a guardian, which is a feature of Northern Qi stone images. Therefore this piece can also be deemed a forgery based on iconographic characteristics that do not match the purported time period of the inscription and traditional features of Northern Qi Buddhist images.

Imitating famous inscriptions was a common practice. For example, a stone stele in the collection of the Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, Indiana, depicts a figure in a cross-ankled pose typical of Northern Wei Maitreya bodhisattva, but the figure has Tang stylistic characteristics. It is interesting that



17

17  
Tablet depicting a Buddha triad  
With spurious inscription dated 536  
Limestone  
Height 27.2 cm, width 17.7 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1912.80

the inscription on this stele had been copied from an existing text commissioned by Sun Chiusheng 孫秋生 in the seventh year of Taihe (483) in the Guyang Cave at Longmen, but with certain variations.<sup>57</sup> Emulating well-known inscriptions apparently was a common way to create forgeries.

### Inscriptions Disobey Subjects

Some inscriptions on objects do not match their subjects, because their creators did not understand how to make the inscriptions correctly correspond with the features of each work. The stone sculpture of bodhisattva (fig. 16) sitting relaxed on the back of a *kylin* (unicorn), a legendary auspicious animal, is one such example. Bodhisattva figures with this type of pose and animal vehicle occurred no earlier than the tenth century; a Northern Song Guanyin sculpture sitting on the back of a *kylin* in a similar posture in Chongqing monastery at Changzi County, Shanxi province, is an early example<sup>58</sup>. The background of the Freer image represents a river, a mountain, and some clouds, a setting that became popular for Guanyin images after the Five Dynasties period (917–60). The two attendants located on both sides of the main figure exhibit features similar to that of Sudhana and Dragon Girl, the two attendants of Guanyin, and this combination is not found in works before the tenth century. However, the inscription on the back of the piece in figure 17 indicates that a woman whose family name is Cijia 刺佳 commissioned one image of *Qingxin* 清心 [clear heart] Buddha in the first year of Wuding (543) in the Eastern Wei period (534–49). Obviously, the date corresponding to the given reign title does not fit the style of the image, and the sub-

ject of the inscription (*Qingxin* Buddha) is not who is depicted. The iconographic characteristics of *Qingxin* Buddha, furthermore, are not spelled out in either Buddhist texts or in artistic tradition.

The stone triad with a standing Buddha and two disciples (fig. 17) also is problematic. The inscription on this image states:

On the eleventh day of the tenth lunar month in the third year of Tianping (536) [in the Eastern Wei period], ... three people respectfully commissioned one stone Guanyin image.

天平三年十月十一日... 三人敬造觀世音石像一區。

The main figure of this triad has an *usnisa* and is wearing a Buddha's robe as if it is a Buddha. By contrast, Guanyin would appear as a bodhisattva usually with Amitabha imagery in his crown. It is clear that the creator of the inscription did not understand the difference between a Buddha and a bodhisattva.

### Folk Pieces or Forgeries?

The inscriptions of the above two images are at least questionable, but whether or not the original pieces are forgeries raises another issue. The contents of these two inscriptions show that their makers did not understand the basic iconographic features to employ for the specific deities mentioned in the inscriptions. Examining the two images, I cannot find any anachronistic features or those that disobey the rules of Buddhist texts. The figures of these two pieces, however, have extremely large heads in proportion to the rest of their bodies, and the surfaces of the images reveal a rough technique. These features are similar to those in some folk images and forgeries, because forgeries may include stylistic characteristics similar to those found in folk works. Common craftsmen who were untrained in traditional Buddhist art could produce folk images of low quality, as opposed to the professional artistic style in metropolitan areas. On the other hand, Chinese Buddhist iconography is, at times, not as standard as the art tradition or the rules mentioned in Buddhist sutras, and this phenomenon conceivably could often be seen on folk pieces. Sometimes it is necessary to make a decision about whether works are forged or folk objects when confronting a piece with the above-mentioned style and mistakes.

Compared with genuine sculptures, a few pieces in the Freer collection represent low-quality workmanship. A standing gilt bronze bodhisattva inscribed in the sixth year of Taihe (482) in the Northern Wei is such an image (fig. 18). The body of the figure is misshapen: the head does not fit on the shoulders, the right





18



19

18

Bodhisattva  
With inscription dated 482  
Gilt bronze (482)  
Height 15.5 cm, width 6.7 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1911.131

19

White-robed Guanyin  
Limestone  
Height 36.6 cm, width 17.1 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1912.85

and left shoulders are not balanced, and one hand is out of proportion to the body.<sup>59</sup> A seated white-robed Guanyin (fig. 19) featuring a carving of a dragon swimming in sea on the base was a common motif in the Song period.<sup>60</sup> Most white-robed Guanyin figures have very gentle faces, but the bodily proportions of the Freer white-robed Guanyin are not balanced: the head is overly large and his face is very stern. A standing stone thousand-armed Guanyin also has a blank facial expression and his many arms are clumsily rendered, so that the image lacks the powerful elegance of other genuine pieces depicting the thousand-armed Guanyin that are worshiped in some Buddhist temples (fig. 20). Another low-quality image is a round stone plaque with a relief carving of a standing white-robed Guanyin flanked by two bare-chested boys wearing shorts (fig. 21). This combination of figures cannot correspond to the tradition of any Guanyin triad, including a common combination of Guanyin flanked by Sudhana and Dragon Girl. This Guanyin, furthermore, has masklike eyes, its arms are posed unnaturally, and its chin points to one side. These features are usually referred to in Chinese as “*su* 俗” meaning “vulgar” as opposed to “*ya* 雅” meaning “elegant.”

Were these poor quality pieces made by unskilled people who were not artists trained in the Buddhist traditions, were they created by people intentionally producing forgeries, or both? It is possible that common people who were not professional Buddhist artists made these images. When I visited the sites of Buddhist cave temples and cliff sculptures in China, I saw many modern low-quality Buddhist images made by nonprofessional craftspeople who lived far from metropolitan areas. Some of these pieces were very unattractive to artists and scholars but were fascinating to farmers and had no intention of deceiving them. On the other hand, a metropolitan craftsman who was untrained in Buddhist art traditions could also have made figures of similar quality.



20

20

Thousand-armed Guanyin  
Stone  
Height 74.5 cm, width 40 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1909.375

Why is it difficult to find these low-quality works in Chinese museums, but easy to find them in foreign collections? Did Chinese and visiting Western dealers collect them from the countryside, or did the people who created these works present them as genuine pieces to gullible buyers? The purpose of Buddhist artists was to create sculptures that represented “beautiful” images of deities to affect believers. Thus Buddhist images ranged from elegant to powerful, but they were rarely made intentionally “ugly.” In fact, as discussed above, many forged Chinese Buddhist sculptures are low-quality works made by craftsmen who lacked the ability to create elegant figures. The preceding discussion reveals that Chinese urban antique markets already included many unattractive or forged figures by the early twentieth century. According to Freer’s diary, he bought sculptures, including those of high- and low-quality, and genuine and forged images, in large Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Kaifeng.<sup>61</sup> Because the supply of genuine pieces was limited, some unscrupulous Chinese forgers created works with a low-quality appearance in response to the demand from buyers (especially foreigners). Foreign collectors who lacked knowledge of the tradition of Chinese Buddhist art styles purchased a number of forgeries for foreign collections and museums. It is probable that the poor-quality images I discussed above, including the two Freer pieces with spurious inscriptions that disobey the subjects, were made by forgers to deceive foreigners. Although it is possible that there could be some genuine low-quality pieces made by craftspeople during the centuries and now collected by some institutions, identifying a folk-style image as a forgery is usually a safe way to evaluate and choose genuine pieces for a public exhibition.



21

21

Tablet depicting a triad  
Stone  
Height 17 cm, width 17 cm  
Freer Gallery of Art, Gift of Charles  
Lang Freer, F1910.13

### Regarding Contemporary High-Quality Forgeries

The above four methods are useful in identifying creative or imitated forgeries but unsuitable for exact reproductions. A close copy or reproduction of an original piece is different from a creative or imitated work. Exact copies are analogous to modern technology's ability to produce photographic reproductions, as Mark Jones suggests, "indisputably veracious; to those who saw them, even those who made them, they seemed more real than the actuality."<sup>62</sup> But these replicas are not exact duplicates of original pieces in appearance *and* material. Like Mark Sagoff's suggestion, since the original and the close copy are not "equally accurate, equally skillful, ingenious, suggestive, or creative as representations," the scientific analysis of the material composition of bronze and stone Buddhist sculptures (including both material and decoration such as pigment) can help us identify reproductions.<sup>63</sup> Some of these material details, in fact, are visible without the use of scientific instruments.

Even though these forgeries have kept flooding the markets since the 1990s, and the purchaser cannot send each of them to a scientific lab before making a decision about whether or not to acquire them, there is another way to identify these high-quality spurious works without any help from scientific instruments. In 2003, a curator from a U.S. museum sent me a digital photo of an image and asked my opinion on its authenticity. The photo showed a high Tang period bodhisattva's head with a plump and delicate face that displayed superb workmanship from around the middle of the eighth century. It appeared to be flawless! However, it reminded me of a famous similar head excavated from an imperial site in Xi'an, the capital of the Tang dynasty, and now in the collection of the Xi'an Cultural



Relics Bureau. Comparing it with the genuine head, I could only find a few differing features on the headdress of the one in the photo, but the difference did not represent any of the telltale mistakes I have discussed. Nonetheless, because the genuine head, which served as the model for the forged piece, has no other known parallel, such a close copy of a unique work raises doubts. Then a question rises: Is it a trend for forgers to produce very similar copies based on well-known images? This assumption was proved when I was in New York City in 2006. I was invited by a dealer to examine about fifty Chinese Buddhist sculptures, from which he intended to select genuine pieces for his gallery exhibition. I found some high-quality images with Northern Qi features very similar to those excavated from Longxing monastery, a well-known site for Buddhist sculptures in Qingzhou, Shandong. Later in a library, I searched a catalogue on Qingzhou sculptures and found the prototypes for the art dealer's sculptures.<sup>64</sup> It was obvious that the forgers had abundant knowledge of famous Chinese Buddhist images and familiarity with the original images.

My visit to the gallery also demonstrated that the four ways I have described still work for identifying most contemporary high-quality forgeries. Except for a few exact copies among the fifty sculptures from the gallery, most of them imitated the basic genuine features of the originals, but displayed small changes in inconspicuous areas such as a part of headdress, drapery folds, a mudra, and the arrangement of ornamentation. These small mistakes in adding unusual features to the contemporary ones they represented were identical to the inaccuracies made by forgers from the late Qing or early Republic period. Although forgers have learned a great deal over the past century, their limited knowledge of Buddhist art history still prevents them from accurately producing their spurious copies.

### Epilogue

Based on the motivation of a forgery, only those pieces that claim to be genuine and try to deceive people (usually potential buyers) for making profit are forgeries. From the Northern Song period onward, epigraphers' appreciation for Buddhist sculpture and research stimulated forgers to create spurious antiques. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the Western antique trade inspired Chinese artists to produce forgeries to meet the demands of foreigners. The four ways of comparing the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of forgeries and genuine pieces are useful in identifying forged pieces from collections of Chinese Buddhist sculptures. These methods address pieces with elements that do not follow the iconographic "rules" in Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art, works with two or more different styles that are not contemporary, objects with spurious archaic

inscriptions, and forged pieces with a folk aesthetic style. Some forgeries can be identified by using two or more of these four methods, because they reveal more than one kind of mistake that the forgers usually made. These methods are still useful in identifying most contemporary forged pieces produced from 1990s onward, except for exact high-quality imitations of genuine images. Because of the exact reproduction often involved in some well-known pieces, or a famous group of images, it is possible to discover the tricks a forger, who was familiar with the original works, employed.

It is hard to date every forgery discussed above, but we can identify some of the contexts for making forgeries in Chinese history. Because of general misunderstandings about the characteristics of antiquity, fabricators used any contemporary stylistic characteristic, not necessarily historically correct ones, as their reference. Some dates for these works can be ascertained by examining their characteristics. For example, if certain forgeries possess archaic characteristics filtered through Song period style, they were probably made during the Song period. On the contrary, we cannot confidently date most of these forgeries because their creators mixed different styles together in a single piece. But based on the history of forgeries presented in the previous section, most of these forgeries could have been made in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.

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## NOTES

The author would like to acknowledge Jan Stuart, Ann Gunter, and Mariah Keller for their thoughtful suggestions and editing assistance.

- Chinese scholars have published some books that identify forgeries and fakes, but these books do not usually have a section devoted to fake or forged Chinese Buddhist sculptures. Dai Nanhai 戴南海, Zhang Maorong 張懋熔, and Zhou Xiaolu 周曉陸, *Wenwu Jianding Miyao* 文物鑒定秘要 [The essentials of identifying antiquities] (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1994) is the largest book of this type. However, the book includes Chinese Buddhist sculptures in the section on steles and rubbings, and it is limited to providing some examples of forged image inscriptions, brief historical references, and two methods for making forgeries (i.e., imitating and forging). See pp. 416–18, 421.
- See Lu Zengxiang 陸增祥, *Baqionshi Jinshi Buzheng* 八瓊室金石補正 [Supplement on correcting the inscriptions of bronzes and stone sculptures at eight-jade studio] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), 954–57.
- In chapter 10 of the *Yushi* 語石 [Talking stone], Qing dynasty scholar Ye Changchi 葉昌熾 (1847–1917) wrote: “[We] can identify them (forgeries) by analyzing whether the style of the calligraphy is ancient or modern.” See *Shike Shiliao Xinbian* 2 石刻史料新編 [New compilation of stone historical materials 2] (Taipei: Xinwenfeng Chuban Gongsi, 1979), 24:12021–022. According to Stuart J. Fleming, “Western imitators have been similarly unsuccessful in their production of many early Chinese works of art. One Buddhist stele, now in Cologne, bears an inscription date intended to attribute the work to AD 501 but quotes a day of that period that did not exist in the calendar. A more common error is the use of posthumously-allotted titles on a piece with the idea of placing it in a particular Emperor’s reign.” See Stuart J. Fleming, *Authenticity in Art: The Scientific Detection of Forgery* (New York: Crane, Russak & Co Inc., 1976), 14–15.
- Li Jingjie and Wang Quanli, “Foxiang Yanpin Yinsu Fenxi” 佛像鑒品因素分析 [Discussing some factors of fake Buddhist images], *Meishu Guancha* 12 (1996): 66–69.
- Jin Shen, *Foxiang de jianchang yu bianwei* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2002), 100–104.
- See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 108. Some scholars did not agree with Goodman’s argument. See Louise H. Morton and Thomas R. Foster, “Goodman, Forgery, and the Aesthetic,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 155–59, and W. E. Kennick, “Art and Inauthenticity,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44, no. 1 (Fall 1985): 3–12. However, I concur with Goodman’s argument that there is an aesthetic difference between an original artwork and a fake or forgery. The forgers of Chinese Buddhist sculptures always misunderstood traditional iconographic and stylistic characteristics, so Goodman’s theory could be used for my study.
- From 1999 to 2000, I was in residence at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., as a senior fellow. In 2001, I was appointed a senior fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., in 2001. I visited nine museums in the United States and examined pieces in their collections; this research provided me an excellent opportunity to discover



- and study forgeries of Chinese Buddhist art.
8. John A. Pope, preface to *The Freer Gallery of Art: China* (Tokyo: Kodansha Ltd., 1971), 9–14. Regarding the masterpieces of Chinese Buddhist sculpture in the Freer collection, see Angela F. Howard, “Highlights of Chinese Buddhist Sculpture in the Freer Collection,” *Orientalism* 24, no. 5 (May 1993): 93–101.
  9. Jan Stuart and I discussed five problematic pieces from the Freer collection, including a gilt brass standing Buddha (F1909.281), a marble stele depicting Maitreya (F1952.28), and a limestone Buddhist stele dated 564 (F1923.14). See Jan Stuart and Chang Qing, “Chinese Buddhist Sculpture in New Light at the Freer Gallery of Art,” *Orientalism* 33, no. 4 (April 2002): 32–35. In addition, the private curatorial files of the Freer collection contain additional comments from various curators and scholars regarding some problematic pieces.
  10. Mark Jones, ed., *Fake? The Art of Deception* (London: British Museum Publications Ltd., 1990), 16.
  11. See Samuel A. Goudsmith, foreword to Fleming, *Authenticity in Art*.
  12. See Michael Wreen, “Is, Madam? Nay, It Seems!” in *The Forger’s Art*, ed. Denis Dutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 189.
  13. See Monroe C. Beardsley, “Notes on Forgery,” in Dutton, *The Forger’s Art*, 226.
  14. See Kennick, “Art and Inauthenticity,” 6.
  15. For the definition of reproduction, see Mark Sagoff, “The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries,” and Rudolf Arnheim, “On Duplication,” in Dutton, *The Forger’s Art*, 145, 232–45, respectively. Regarding the function of a copy, see Joseph Margolis, “Art, Forgery, and Authenticity,” in Dutton, *The Forger’s Art*, 157–60.
  16. See *Challenging the Past: The Paintings of Chang Dai-chien*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1991), 34–35.
  17. For example, the Northern Song official Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72) stated that “the antique articles [of rubbings] I collected number about one thousand pieces and cover periods from the Zhou and Qin [ca. 10,000 BCE–207 BCE] to the Xiande [r. 954–60 in the Five Dynasties (907–60)]. Among these pieces, seventy or eighty percent are Tang [pieces]. The [authors of the] writings range from famous high officials to hermits who lived in mountains and forests.” [余所集錄古文，自周秦以下訖於顯德，凡為千卷，唐居其十七八。其名臣顯達，下至山林幽隱之士，所書莫不皆有.] See Ouyang Xiu, *Jigulu Bawei* 集古錄跋尾 [Postscript of records of antiquity compilation], in *Shike Shiliao Xinbian* 1, 24:17888.
  18. A number of bronze vessels have been identified as Song period fakes that imitate the vessels of the Bronze Age. See Jones, *Fake? The Art of Deception*, 37.
  19. Ouyang Xiu, *Jigulu Bawei*, in *Shike Shiliao Xinbian* 1, 24:17888.
  20. Ye Changchi, *Yushi*, in *Shike Shiliao Xinbian* 2, 16:11879–880.
  21. *Ibid.*, 24:11880.
  22. This image was made in the first year of Zhongdatong (546) in the Liang period (502–57). Gu Ting 顧廷 donated it to the Shanghai Museum in 1960. See Ding Wenguang 丁文光, “Liang Zhongdatong Yuannian zao Shijia Shixiang” 梁中大同元年造釋迦石像 [The Sakyamuni image made in the first year of Zhongdatong of Liang] *Wenwu* 12 (1961): 50–51.
  23. Ye Changchi, *Yushi*, 24:11943.
  24. *Ibid.*, 24:11880.
  25. *Ibid.* 24:11943–944.
  26. For more information, see Warren Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many foreign scholars from Britain, Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, Russia, Japan, and the United States explored Chinese archaeological sites. Of them, Aurel Stein was the most famous. His major publications provide information on his journeys; see *Sand Buried Ruins of Khotan* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1903), *Ancient Khotan*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), *Serindia*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921), and *Innermost Asia*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928).
  27. Pope, preface to *The Freer Gallery of Art: China*, 9–14.
  28. Actually, Freer treated all the forgeries I discussed below as genuine pieces. If he knew the workshops of the forgers, he would not buy their pieces. Therefore, the sources of these forged images in the Freer collection are unknown.
  29. For information on American collectors, dealers, and scholars who purchased Chinese antiquities from the end of nineteenth century until 1949, see Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture*, 37–151.
  30. For the descriptions of Buddha’s thirty-two laksanas and the eighty physical characteristics, see chapter 381 of *Daboro boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, trans. Tang dynasty monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (600–664), in T6, 967c–68ab.
  31. The gesture of this standing figure is similar to the gesture of the sandalwood Sakyamuni images from ancient China. For example, a standing red sandalwood image of the Sakyamuni Buddha (collection of Seiryōji in Kyoto, Japan) was brought by Japanese monk Chonen from the Northern Song Empire. An inscription dates the carving of this

- figure to sometime before 985. The Buddha forms an *abhaya* mudra with his right hand and a boon-granting gesture with his left hand. See Gregory Henderson and Leon Hurvitz, "The Buddha of Seiryōji: New Finds and a New Theory," *Artibus Asiae* 19 (1956): 5–21. This type of Sakyamuni Buddha figure was said to be commissioned by Udayana, a king of Kausambi and contemporary of Sakyamuni, who is reputed to have made the first image of the Buddha.
32. Regarding Buddha's *usnisa*, see chapter 381 of *Daboro bohuimiduo jing*, trans. Xuanzang, in T6, 968b.
  33. A genuine marble Buddhist stele (F1913.27) from the Northern Qi in the Freer collection is an example of guardian images from that period. See Stuart and Qing, "Chinese Buddhist Sculpture in New Light," fig. 7.
  34. Jan Stuart and I briefly discussed this sculpture (F1909.281). *Ibid.*, 32–33.
  35. See Stanley K. Abe, *Ordinary Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), figs. 4.13, 4.14, 4.22, and 4.24.
  36. See Matsubara Saburō 松原三郎, *Chūgoku Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zu-hanhen Ichi: Gishin Nanbokuchō zenki* 中國佛教雕刻史論-圖版編一: 魏晉南北朝前期 [Discussing the history of Chinese Buddhist sculptures-plates 1: Early stages of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1995), pl. 72ab; Jin Shen, *Zhongguo Lidai Jinian Foxiang Tudian* 中國歷代紀年佛像圖典 [Pictorial catalogue on Chinese dated Buddhist images] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1994), pl. 38; *Tokubetsu Ten: Chūgoku no Kondō Butsu* 特別展: 中國の金銅佛 [Special exhibition: Chinese gilt bronze Buddhas] (Nara: Yamato Bunkakan, 1992), pl. 11.
  37. An early and good example of white-robed Guanyin, carved in the tenth–twelfth century, can be seen in Yanxia Cave at Hangzhou, Zhejiang. See *Zhongguo shiku diaosu quanji bianji weiyuanhui*, ed. *Zhongguo shiku diaosu quanji-10-Nanfang bashing* 中國石窟雕塑全集-10-南方八省 [The collection of the sculptures from Chinese grottoes, vol. 10, Eight provinces from the south.] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2000), fig. 27.
  38. Saburō, *Chūgoku Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zuhanhen Ichi*, pls. 140ab, 167ab.
  39. See Gansusheng wenwu gongzuodui 甘肅省文物工作隊, ed. *Zhongguo shiku-Yongjing Bingling si* 中國石窟-永靖炳靈寺 [Chinese grottoes—Bingling grottoes in Yongjing] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), figs. 127–68.
  40. Saburō, *Chūgoku Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zuhanhen Ichi*, pl. 293ab.
  41. The two attendant standing bodhisattvas dated 673 in Huijian cave at Longmen are examples. See Longmen wenwu baoguansuo, ed., *Zhongguo shiku-Longmen shiku* 中國石窟-龍門石窟 [Chinese grottoes-Longmen grottoes] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992), 2:89, 90.
  42. See Longmen wenwu baoguansuo, ed., *Zhongguo shiku-Longmen shiku*, 2:fig. 64.
  43. See Ji Chongjian 季崇建, *Qiannian Fodiao shi* 千年佛雕史 [The history of one thousand years' Buddhist sculptures] (Taipei: Yishu tushu gongsi, 1997), pl. 172. The author discusses the image as a genuine masterpiece.
  44. Guoli Lishi Bowuguan 國立歷史博物館, *Fodiao Zhimei: Beichao Fojiao Shidiao Yishu* 佛雕之美: 北朝佛教石窟藝術 [Beauty of Buddhist sculptures: Buddhist stone sculptural arts in the Northern Dynasties] (Taipei: Guoli lishi bowuguan, 1997), pl. 69.
  45. Yan Wenru 閻文儒, "Shichuang" 石幢 [Stone pillars], *Wenwu* 8 (1959): 47–48.
  46. Regarding water moon Guanyin, see Chun-fang Yu, *Guanyin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 233–47.
  47. Ye Changchi, *Yushi*, 24:11880, 11943.
  48. *Ibid.*, 24:11944.
  49. Zhai Chunling 翟春玲, "Shanxi Qinglongsi Fojiao Caoxiangbei" 陝西青龍寺佛教造像碑 [The Buddhist steles with images of Qinglong Monastery in Shaanxi], *Kaogu* 考古 7 (1992): 624–31.
  50. See Gansusheng wenwu gongzuodui, ed., *Zhongguo shiku-Yongjing Bingling si*, figs. 18, 21, 47, and 62. Paul Jett and Janet G. Douglas identified this piece as genuine, but they did not publish a picture. See "Chinese Buddhist Bronzes in the Freer Gallery of Art: Physical Features and Elemental Composition," *Materials Research Society* 267 (1992): 216.
  51. For research on this image as a genuine piece, see Saburō, *Chūgoku Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zuhanhen Ichi*, pl. 257.
  52. Lingyishi Bowuguan 臨沂市博物館 Feng Yi 馮沂, "Shandong Linyi Faxian Beiwei Taihe Yuannian Shicaoxiang" 山東臨沂發現北魏太和元年石造像 [The discovery of the stone image dated to the first year of Taihe in the Northern Wei Dynasty in Linyi, Shandong], *Wenwu* 10 (1986): 96.
  53. Three Chinese publications used this image as a masterpiece. See Jin, *Zhongguo Lidai Jinian Foxiang Tudian*, pl. 107; Tian Jun 田軍, "Shijia Duobaofu Bingzuo Jintongxiang de Fenqi yu Fenbu" 釋迦多寶佛並坐金銅像的分期與分布 [Research on the chronology and regions of images of gilt bronze Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna], in *Zhongguo Jingtongfo*, 256; Li Yumin 李玉瑋, "Hebei Zaoqi de Fojiao Zaoxiang: Shiliuguo he Beiwei Shiqi" 河北早期的佛教造像: 十六國和北魏時期 [The early Buddhist images in Hebei during the periods of

- the Sixteen Kingdoms and Northern Wei], *Gugong Xueshi Jikan* 故宫學術季刊 11, no. 4 (1994): 15, 62, 74.
54. See Fleming, *Authenticity in Art*, 7.
  55. See Liu Jinglong, ed., *Guyang dong* 古陽洞 [Guyang cave] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2001), 1:42; 2:29. This niche includes a seated Buddha in lotus posture with two standing bodhisattvas.
  56. Some American scholars still think that this image (F11.139) is genuine based on research into the material composition of the bronze. See Jett and Douglas, “Chinese Buddhist Bronzes in the Freer Gallery of Art,” 212, 216.
  57. See Kenneth Ganza, “A Forged Buddhist Stele Inscription as a Case Study in Chinese Epigraphy,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 3, no. 3 (July–September 1991): 512–22.
  58. See Zhongguo meishu quanji bianji weiyuanhui, ed., *Zhongguo meishu quanji-diaosu bian 5-Wudai Song diaosu* 中国美术全集-雕塑编5-五代宋雕塑 [Collections of Chinese art-sculptures 5—Sculptures from Song and Yuan] (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1988), fig. 63.
  59. Matsubara Saburō published this image as a genuine piece. See *Chūgoku Bukkyō Chokoku Shiron-Zuhanden Ichi*, pl. 73a. Furthermore, Paul Jett and Janet G. Douglas thought that it was genuine. See “Chinese Buddhist Bronzes in the Freer Gallery of Art” 216.
  60. There is a stone Guanyin sculpture (F1913.28) in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art that has a carving of swimming dragon on the base. It was commissioned by Mu Zibai 慕子白 in the sixth year of Yuanyou (1091) in the Northern Song period.
  61. Pope, preface to *The Freer Gallery of Art: China*, 9–14.
  62. Jones, *Fake? The Art of Deception*, 18.
  63. See Sagoff, “The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries,” 146. In addition, Paul Jett and Janet G. Douglas identified some Chinese Buddhist bronzes in the Freer collection by analyzing their elemental composition. See “Chinese Buddhist Bronzes in the Freer Gallery of Art,” 205–23.
  64. Regarding Buddhist sculptures from this site, see Lukas Nickel ed., *Return of the Buddha: the Qingzhou Discoveries* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002).





## HUIZONG'S NEW CLOTHES

*Desire and Allegory in Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk***Abstract**

The handscroll *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*, attributed to the Northern Song emperor Huizong (1082–1135, r. 1100–1125) and now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, derives from an original composition by the Tang court painter Zhang Xuan (fl. 714–742). It is generally interpreted as a document of the activities of court ladies, particularly the rite of palace sericulture; however, literary evidence clarifies that Huizong's painting considerably revises the original, presenting steps of making clothes that also appear as tropes in erotic poetry. This essay argues that Huizong's painting comments on his own reign and highlights the women's desire for an unpictured man, presumably Huizong himself. Evoking longing through pounding silk, sewing, and ironing recalls literature that employs a female persona's desire as allegory for an advisor's unswerving devotion to a ruler. Simultaneously referring to palace sericulture not only suggests that the clothes are for the emperor, but also reiterates the women's propriety (a concern in Huizong's palace poetry as well). *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* thus subtly implies the emperor's fitness to rule, serving as an intimate counterpart to a public body of work that affirms his possession of the mandate of heaven.

HISTORIANS WRITING ABOUT CHINESE PAINTINGS belonging to the *shinü hua* 仕女畫 genre, which I translate as “paintings of elite women,” tend to discuss them as paintings that represent stereotypically feminine activities and nothing more, overlooking the correspondence between many of these images and traditions of erotic poetry.<sup>1</sup> One painting of elite women whose debt to erotic poetry merits further examination is the early twelfth-century handscroll *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* (fig. 1), attributed to the Northern Song emperor Huizong 徽宗 (1082–1135, r. 1100–1125), in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Accepted as a copy after a painting by Tang dynasty artist Zhang Xuan 張萱 (fl. 714–742), the painting depicts luxuriously adorned ladies demonstrating three steps in making clothes: pounding silk with poles, sewing, and ironing. Scholars have proposed that it represents a rite known as “palace sericulture” (*gong can* 宮蠶), but there is more to this painting than a simple representation of the traditional activities of palace women. The painter clearly draws upon the imagery of erotic poetry, presenting beautiful women—most likely, imperial concubines—as experiencing desire for an unidentified absent man: a theme that critics of poetry sometimes suggest encodes an allegorical or political meaning. In this essay, I will reexamine the unabashedly erotic imagery of the scroll and argue that the absent man implicated here is the emperor himself: as such, Huizong may have specifically intended this scroll to attest to his power. *Court Ladies Preparing*



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Attributed to Emperor Huizong (1082–1135, r. 1100–1125), after Zhang Xuan (fl. 713–742), *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*, Northern Song dynasty, early 12TH century; handscroll, ink, color, and gold on silk, 37.0 x 145.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Special Chinese and Japanese Fund, © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).

*Newly Woven Silk* may serve as an implicit display of the emperor's ability to command devotion and loyalty.

There is no direct evidence connecting this painting to Huizong: it does not bear his cipher, inscription, or seals. Still, the painting can be associated with the Northern Song emperor through the inscription and seals of the Jin dynasty emperor Zhangzong 章宗 (1168–1208, r. 1190–1208), who came into possession of many of Huizong's paintings and attested that this scroll belonged to Huizong. Presumably, the Jurchens confiscated the painting after Huizong's capture.<sup>2</sup> The full Chinese title of the painting, *Tianshui's Copy of Zhang Xuan's "Pounding Silk"* (*Tianshui mo Zhang Xuan Daolian tu* 天水摹張萱搗練圖), is written in a hand that resembles Huizong's renowned slender-gold calligraphy, which Zhangzong himself practiced, and Zhangzong's seal *Mingchang* 明昌 is stamped over the title. Elsewhere, four of Zhangzong's seals are relatively easy to identify. Preceding the painting, on the mounting, one finds a gourd-shaped seal reading *Bi fu* 祕府 (before the title strip) and a square seal reading *Mingchang baowan* 明昌寶玩 (at the bottom edge). On the seam between the end of the painting and the mounting, one finds two more square seals: *Yufu baohui* 御府寶繪 (at the top edge) and *Neidian zhenwan* 內殿珍玩 (at the bottom edge).<sup>3</sup> Although Zhangzong's title for the painting appears to assert that Huizong himself painted it (Tianshui is Huizong's sobriquet), Maggie Bickford's research indicates that court painters likely acted as Huizong's surrogate in most (if not all) instances.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the painting has neither Huizong's cipher nor his inscription clearly dissociates it from a group of paintings intended for official use as imperial instruments (in Bickford's terminology), for which Huizong claimed authorship.<sup>5</sup> Yet the scroll displays certain stylistic features that Bickford has identified as common to seven other important Huizong attributions, which she describes as "visually compel-





ling, yet flat as a board,” an effect achieved in part through the isolation of the figures against a blank ground, precise brushwork, and vivid color.<sup>6</sup> These qualities can likewise be seen in another painting for which attribution to Huizong is unquestioned: *Five-Colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree* (fig. 2), also in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In addition, the *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue* records that Huizong owned a painting by Zhang Xuan titled *Pounding Silk*, so it is feasible that this is a copy of that earlier painting.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we may be reasonably confident that *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* was likely made for the emperor, and therefore we may still refer to it as Huizong’s scroll.

Zhang Xuan, of course, is one of the two prominent eighth-century court painters (along with Zhou Fang 周昉, fl. 730–800) who specialized in elite women, and Huizong’s scroll clearly depicts nine elite ladies assisted by two girls and accompanied by a small child. The ladies dress in sumptuously colored, empire-waisted garments of silk patterned with abstract designs, floral motifs, or paired birds. Their hair is piled atop their heads with the aid of spotted bamboo combs and hairpins. They are full-figured, a detail likely taken from Zhang Xuan’s original painting, as it suggests the eighth-century fashion for plumpness. The English title of Huizong’s scroll, *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*, reveals a long-standing assumption about the status of the women, presumably because both the original painting and the copy suggest court production and therefore a palace context. The reference to court ladies, however, is not present in the scroll’s Chinese title, and it is only prudent to acknowledge the difficulty of determining whether an artist intends figures so beautifully attired to represent idealizations or historical figures of an identifiable social status.<sup>8</sup> Still, I should like to propose that these court ladies could well be imperial concubines, presumably among the most elite of all Chinese women; this reading is supported by connections between the





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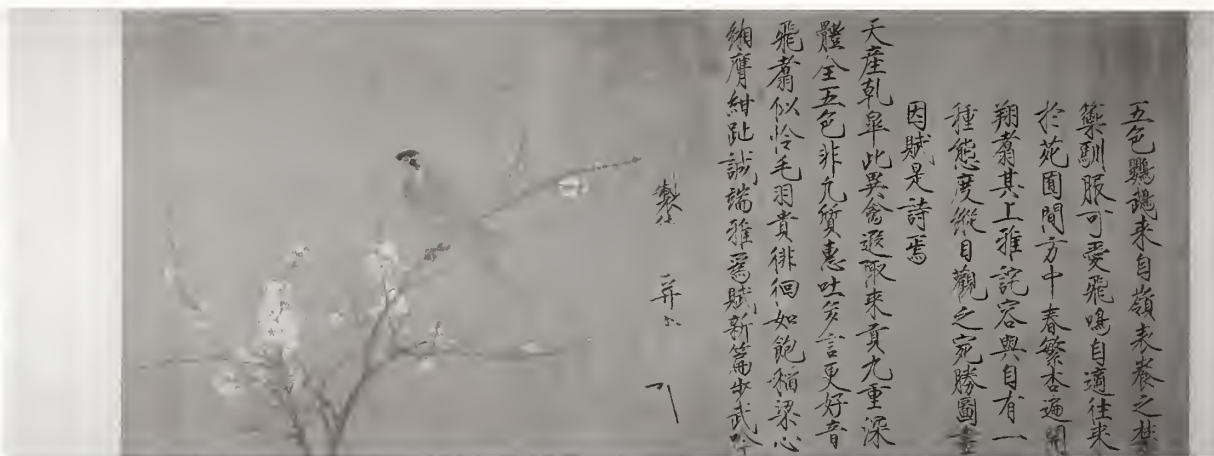
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Emperor Huizong (1082–1135,  
r. 1100–1125), *Five-Colored Parakeet  
on a Blossoming Apricot Tree*,  
Northern Song dynasty, ca. 1110–19;  
handscroll, ink and color on silk,  
53.3 x 125.1 cm. Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston (Maria Antoinette Evans  
Fund, Photograph © Museum of  
Fine Arts, Boston).

content of the painting and examples of palace-style poetry, music bureau poetry, and song lyric, as described more fully below. The three younger figures pictured in Huizong's scroll also dress in richly colored silk, but they wear their hair looped at the ears and held with combs and a bit of ribbon. This hairstyle is generally worn by young girls, whether they are of elite status or servants, and in this case it is difficult to tell whether the painter intended them to be maids or the daughters of concubines. Notably, all but the youngest child wear makeup, accentuating the beauty of their foreheads with stylized floral shapes.

Zhang Xuan's original painting presumably also depicted women of high status: in that case, possibly the concubines of the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗, also known as Minghuang 明皇 (r. 712–756), under whom the artist served. Minghuang's relations with his concubines, especially the notorious Yang Guifei 楊貴妃 (717–756), feature in several well-known pictorial themes. Although to my knowledge there has been no historical mention of a theme of Minghuang's concubines preparing cloth, one can imagine that such an image may have appealed in the same manner as the established themes of Yang Guifei mounting a horse or of Minghuang and his concubines enjoying music.<sup>9</sup> Several of the Zhang Xuan paintings in Huizong's collection—as well as others by Tang artists Yang Sheng 楊昇 (fl. 714–742), Chen Hong 陳闕 (fl. 714–763), Zhou Fang, Wang Pei 王勣 (n.d.), and Du Tingmu 杜庭睦 (n.d.)—bear titles that explicitly name Minghuang or Yang Guifei.<sup>10</sup> Huizong may well have had a particular interest in paintings depicting Minghuang and his concubines, or at least paintings set in the context of the Tang palace; on the other hand, he may simply have sought paintings by the eminent court painters of earlier periods.

Why a Northern Song painter copied Zhang Xuan's version of *Pounding Silk* is less clear, especially because it seems that the copyist considerably updated the composition. Zhang Xuan's version of *Pounding Silk* does not survive, but what may be a description of it can be found in the writings of Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257). According to this Jin dynasty scholar, Zhang Xuan had painted a set of scrolls depicting the activities of palace women; Yuan refers to the scrolls as *Four Scenes of Palace Women* (*Sijing gongnü* 四景宮女), which may simply be a descriptive title. His long discussion of the paintings includes painstaking notations on the clothing and status of the figures, and he describes images of female entertainers performing music, female scholars writing, imperial concubines picking

flowers, and maidservants holding children.<sup>11</sup> The third scroll of the set depicts essentially the same subject represented in Huizong's scroll. Yuan's description of that scroll reads:

One [of the scrolls depicts] a large paulownia tree with a well beneath it, and beside the well a silver bed. Under the tree are four or five fallen leaves. An imperial concubine with her hair pinned up wears a pale yellow garment with half-sleeves colored bright red and with dark flowers on her patterned skirt. She sits on the square bed, which has a quilt but no bed-skirt. She pounds silk with a pole at the foot of the bed, and a maidservant holding a pole stands in front of the bed. Another maidservant facing her beats the silk. The silk bears a pattern of flowers. According to the [*Xuanhe*] *Painting Catalogue*, [Zhang] Xuan made a painting of the poetic line: "By a golden well and a paulownia tree, the autumn leaves turn yellow."<sup>12</sup> It was called *Resentment at the Changmen Palace*.<sup>13</sup> Could this be that painting? The banana leaves are barely altered; it cannot be that this is meaningless. Beneath the tree, an imperial concubine sitting on a square bed wears a headdress of flowered brocade on a green ground and an embroidered red skirt. In the picture, the even brocade fills a box, and a maidservant unrolls the red patterned silk to measure it. Autumn hibiscus grows lushly beside them. A young girl next to a lake rock waves a fan at glowing coals, preparing them for use in ironing silk, while two imperial concubines sit on the large square bed. One [of the concubines] wears a flowered headdress and faces out toward the viewer. She wears a close-fitting garment embroidered in red with blue half-sleeves, a skirt patterned with peach blossoms, and a double-red belt with dangling ends. The other [concubine], with one knee raised at the foot of the bed, stitches clothes. She wears a close-fitting garment in peach blossom brocade with green embroidered trim, and she cuts an embroidered section [of the cloth]. Two maidservants hold white silk twill that another maidservant and an imperial concubine are ironing. A young girl in white brocade playfully lowers her head beneath the silk. The two central figures languidly tie the sashes about their chests, and there is another [figure] with a different skirt. The foregoing constitutes one scroll.

一，大桐樹，下有井，井有銀牀。樹下落葉四五。一內人冠髻，著淡黃半臂金紅衣，青花綾裙，坐方牀，牀加褥而無裙。一擣練杵倚牀下，一女使植杵立牀前。一女使對立擣練。練有花，今之文綾也。《畫譜》謂：萱取『金井梧桐秋葉黃』之句為圖。名《長門怨》者，殆謂此邪？芭蕉葉微變，不為無意。樹下一內人花錦冠，綠背搭，紅繡為裙，坐方牀。繪，平錦滿

箱，一女使展紅纈托量之。此下秋芙蓉滿叢，湖石旁，一女童持扇熾炭，備熨帛之用。二內人坐大方牀：一戴花冠，正面，九分紅繡窄衣，藍半臂，桃花裙，雙紅帶下垂尤顯然；一膝跋牀角以就縫衣之便。一桃花錦窄衣，綠繡欄，裁繡段。二女使掙素綺，女使及一內人平熨之。一女童白錦衣，低首熨帛之下以為戲。中二人雙綬帶胸腹間繫之，亦有不與裙齊者。此上為一幅。<sup>14</sup>

If this description is accurate, Zhang Xuan's original painting seems to have incorporated a great deal of poetic imagery that would signify the longings of lonely women. Yuan Haowen is quite specific in distinguishing the status of three groups of figures: he refers to four imperial concubines (*neiren* 內人),<sup>15</sup> six maidservants (*nüshi* 女使), and a single young girl (*nütong* 女童). Although much of this is preserved in Huizong's scroll, a great deal has been changed as well.

Wu Tung points out that in some respects, Yuan Haowen's description of Zhang Xuan's painting also applies to Huizong's scroll. Its subject matter sounds essentially the same, as Wu summarizes it: "palace ladies beating silk with pestles and measuring it; a young girl fanning the coals for ironing, a lady sewing, with one knee raised on a stool; another lady cutting and tailoring; two ladies stretching a length of white silk while another irons it; and a little girl playing beneath the extended fabric."<sup>16</sup> Huizong's scroll, however, lacks the scenes of women measuring and cutting silk that Yuan Haowen describes. It also omits Zhang Xuan's detailed setting of an autumnal garden: the well, banana tree, hibiscus, lake rock, fallen leaves of the paulownia tree—whose name in Chinese, *wutong* 梧桐, is a pun for "we are the same"—and even the bed. A background of plain silk replaces these elements, many of which are overtly erotic. Finally, Huizong's scroll depicts a greater number of imperial concubines and fewer figures who could be identified as maidservants; in fact, the lovely dress and makeup of the young girls in Huizong's scroll make their status much more ambiguous, less clearly that of servants. This suggests that the painter of Huizong's scroll took a number of liberties in copying the original painting. Although Wu Tung has described *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* as a "tracing copy" (*moben* 摹本) of Zhang Xuan's painting, which would tend to suggest a great degree of conformity to the original composition, he elsewhere acknowledges that the members of Huizong's Imperial Painting Academy sometimes practiced a form of "selective imitation,"<sup>17</sup> which may be closer to the truth in this particular case. Established reasons for copying paintings include that replicating was an effective method of learning to paint, a way of preserving a composition, and a means of ensuring wider circulation of important works. In addition, artists used older works as source material for new compositions,<sup>18</sup>



and this last reason may best describe the relationship between Zhang Xuan's original painting and Huizong's scroll.

The concubines' work with cloth is one aspect of Huizong's painting that should immediately signal that this is not a simple representation of the daily reality of imperial concubines. One senses that in the Tang dynasty, when poems describe working-class women laboring to produce the garments that elite women treat carelessly,<sup>19</sup> an image of imperial concubines making clothes would not accord with the popular conception of the pastimes of elite women, even though they likely did have some experience working with textiles. Elite families encouraged their female members to practice this sort of labor,<sup>20</sup> in part because the Confucian classics indicated that sericulture—regarded as “womanly work” (*nügong* 女工, *nügong* 女紅)—connoted womanly virtue and morality, and no less an authority than Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 45–ca. 115) listed womanly work as one of the four elements that women should strive to cultivate in her *Instructions for Women* (*Nüjie* 女誡).<sup>21</sup> Such work was in fact carried out in the Northern Song palace, where members of the bureau of work, part of the service organization of palace women, were responsible for the production of women's clothing. (The clothing itself then fell under the purview of the bureau of clothing.) The chiefs of the bureau of work oversaw sewing, seamstresses, fabric, dyes, and clothing distribution. Within the bureau, directors of the department of manufacture supervised the sewing of clothing for palace women; directors of the department of precious trimmings oversaw the decoration of women's garments; directors of the department of fabrics presided over brocades, dyes, silks, and hemp for women's clothes; and lower-ranking intendants and supervisors assisted all of the directors listed above. Although Priscilla Ching Chung points out that eighteen of Huizong's nineteen wives (a term she uses to include empresses, imperial consorts, and minor wives) had been effectively promoted from the service organization,<sup>22</sup> it should be noted that the female palace officials working within the organization were not technically concubines.

It is thus necessary to find another explanation for an image of imperial concubines making clothes. Art historians have suggested that *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* represents the ritual activity of palace sericulture.<sup>23</sup> In this imperial rite, the empress and her palace women gathered mulberry leaves, reeled silk from cocoons, and made clothing either for sacrificial purposes or to be worn by the emperor—distinguishing this labor from that of the female officials of the bureau of work. Several early historical texts invariably describe palace sericulture as a springtime ceremony,<sup>24</sup> and in Huizong's scroll, where all of the autumnal components of the original painting's setting are absent, this is a somewhat plausible interpretation of the depicted events. But it is not wholly satisfactory, for



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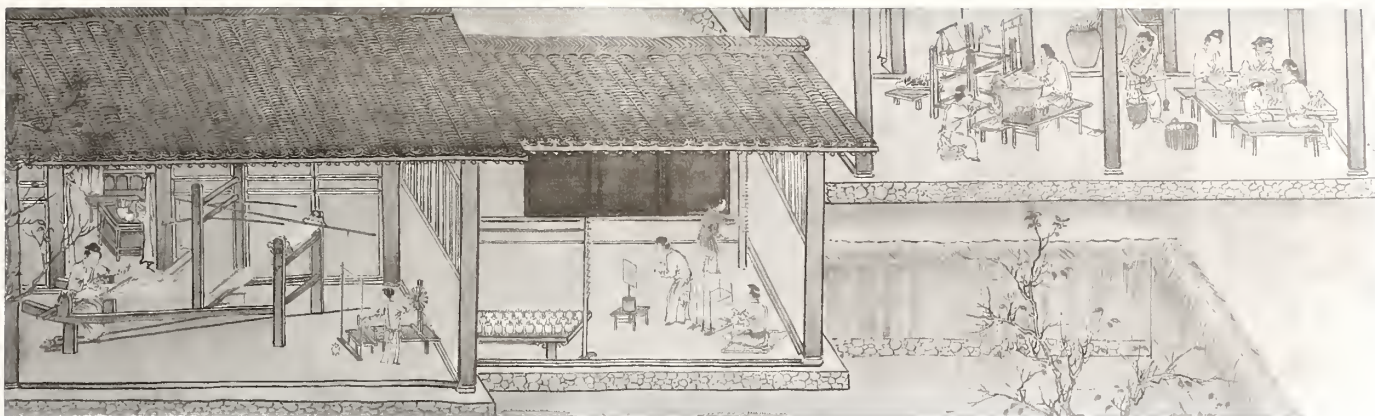
3  
Attributed to Liang Kai (fl. 1201–1204), *Sericulture*, Southern Song dynasty; handscroll, ink and light color on silk, first section: 26.5 x 92.2 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art (John L. Severance Fund 1977.5).

4  
Attributed to Liang Kai (fl. 1201–1204), *Sericulture*, Southern Song dynasty; handscroll, ink and light color on silk, second section: 27.5 x 92.2 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art (John L. Severance Fund 1977.5).

the painting flouts the conventions of palace sericulture in another way: one text specifically notes that the women participating in the rite are commanded “not to adorn themselves in finery.”<sup>25</sup> Palace sericulture is therefore somewhat wanting as an explanation for the events portrayed in Huizong’s painting, although one could assume that the women in this scroll are beautifully adorned precisely because this is the most efficient way of visually conveying their status as imperial concubines, rather than female palace officials who held service positions.

If Huizong’s scroll does represent the solemn rite of palace sericulture, the problem of the women’s attire notwithstanding, then one must also ask why it focuses on only three steps of the process. The particular activities depicted are pounding silk, sewing, and ironing. Other images of sericulture from the Song dynasty tend to emphasize the complexity of the process through a catalogue of multiple steps; one example of such a painting is the Southern Song handscroll attributed to Liang Kai 梁楷 (fl. 1201–1204), which does not depict palace women but rural laborers and also focuses on the earlier steps of the process (figs. 3–5).<sup>26</sup> Still, in comparison, the depiction of palace sericulture in *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* seems curiously abbreviated, and if it in fact derives from the Zhang Xuan painting that Yuan Haowen described, it does not even depict all the steps shown in the original scroll. Clearly the Northern Song painter chose to focus on three activities that were somehow more pertinent to the meaning he wished to convey. It seems likely that these steps were selected precisely because of their decidedly erotic connotations.





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Attributed to Liang Kai (fl. 1201–1204), *Sericulture*, Southern Song dynasty; handscroll, ink and light color on silk, third section: 27.3 x 93.5 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art (John L. Severance Fund 1977.5).

### Pounding Silk as a Poetic and Pictorial Theme

Of all the stages of textile production, perhaps the least perfectly understood is the first activity depicted in *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*—the point at which fabric is beaten with pestles or mallets, referred to as “pounding cloth” (*dao yi* 擣衣) or, more specifically, “pounding silk” (*dao lian* 擣練). Translators of Chinese poetry have for decades referred to this process as “fulling,” a problematic term. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines fulling as “the process of cleansing and thickening cloth by beating and washing.”<sup>27</sup> However, several sources focusing on Chinese textile production suggest that the word “fulling” may convey only one of the desired effects of pounding silk. Ulla Cyrus-Zetterström identifies the process of “pounding silk” as a partial method of degumming raw silk used since the Former Han dynasty. After applying plant ash, a worker would beat the silk with a pestle, which made the removal of gum more efficient. Angela Yu-yun Sheng observes that it would thereafter become soft and supple, and the *Hanyu da cidian* suggests that fine white silk was pounded with mallets precisely to make it softer.<sup>28</sup> But although the consensus appears to be that pounding was done to soften and remove gum from silk, the Chinese sources supply variant interpretations of the term as well: for example, that the procedure could be used to prepare silk for the dyeing process, or that “pounding clothes” later came to mean pounding the wash.<sup>29</sup>

The subject depicted in Huizong’s copy of Zhang Xuan’s painting, that of women making clothes and particularly pounding silk, however, is not primarily a rendition of traditional textile production. Instead, the activities shown in *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* in some ways correspond better to poetry. Pounding cloth is a prominent poetic theme, well known from palace-style poetry, music bureau poetry, and song lyric, among other genres, and is commonly understood as an expression of women’s erotic longings. An early poem clarifies the connotations of the theme:

A green jade pounding-cloth stone  
and a seven-jeweled, golden-lotus mallet—  
I raise it high and slowly let it fall,  
softly pounding just for you.

碧玉擣衣砧，七寶金蓮杵。高舉徐徐下，輕擣只為汝。<sup>30</sup>



This sixth-century poem, titled “Qingyang Ford” (*Qingyang du* 青陽度), is a music bureau poem and was likely meant to be performed, perhaps by a singing girl for a male audience. This poem in particular illustrates the potential for innuendo inherent in the image of pounding cloth. The implement this female persona uses to beat her cloth,<sup>31</sup> the slow and steady rhythm she attains, and the unmistakably intimate tone in which she tells one man in particular that she does it just for him reveal why pounding cloth became a metaphor for erotic reverie. Significantly, the voice in “Qingyang Ford” is that of an elite woman, as the precious nature of her tools attests. In one way, though, this is an exceptional poem, for its female persona seems to be either attempting to seduce a potential partner or engaging in an ongoing, mutually satisfactory love affair. Most other poems on this theme describe women pounding cloth to express their longing for absent men.

The classic scenario of a woman pounding cloth fixes the setting as an autumn night.<sup>32</sup> This helps to set the desired tone: in part, because autumn is a naturally gloomy time of year when nights grow longer and landscape features become barren, but also because the character for “melancholy” (*chou* 愁) combines the characters for “autumn” (*qiu* 秋) and “heart” (*xin* 心). Thus, in the Chinese poetic tradition, references to autumn not only call to mind the passage of time and a woman’s aging, but also serve as metaphors for separation. The woman is alone and worried about her husband, who had been drafted into military service some months earlier. Her distress over their separation becomes concern for his well-being, which in turn takes the form of anxiety over his clothing: because neither had imagined such a long separation, he has only spring- or summer-weight garments with him. (In these respects, the story shares elements of the Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女 legend from the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, third century BCE.)<sup>33</sup> Too worried to sleep, and possibly sexually frustrated as well, she spends her nights pounding cloth and making a set of winter clothes to send him. Thus the sound of poles striking stones becomes synecdochical for melancholy.<sup>34</sup>

There are, of course, variations on the theme that can be correlated to different historical periods. Poems dating to the Southern dynasties and earlier usually tell the sorrow of an elite woman, emphasizing her appearance as she does her work. In particular, the palace-style poems in the sixth-century anthology *New Songs from a Jade Terrace* (*Yutai xinyong* 玉臺新詠) describe how women dress in their finest garments and jewels to perform this manual labor. Although in some poems male personae imagine the wives they left behind faithfully pounding cloth,<sup>35</sup> in others women refuse to pound cloth while their lovers are traveling.<sup>36</sup> Most poems deal with separated spouses, but this is not always the case, as in a work in which the poet shares his fantasies of the unseen woman he hears pounding cloth in the night—someone who must be both lonely and beautiful.<sup>37</sup> In the poetic construct,

pounding cloth could be a way for an elite woman to luxuriate in feelings of longing. In sixth-century variations, the theme becomes so closely associated with longing that it is used as a leitmotif in poems that focus on emotional experience, and the mention of a woman pounding cloth suffices to set a sorrowful tone in very short poems.<sup>38</sup>

During the Tang dynasty, the idea of a woman pounding cloth becomes an overwhelmingly aural image, a noteworthy change from the Southern dynasties. Poem after poem uses the “sound of pounding cloth” (*dao yi sheng* 擣衣聲)—the beat of poles against resonant stones—to elicit a gamut of feelings. For the male traveler, this primarily means homesickness (*xiangxin* 鄉心),<sup>39</sup> brought on by the familiar sound of a domestic activity that his loyal partner would perform. Although he misses his partner, she represents the comforts of home, and it is difficult to separate his feelings for her from his homesickness. For the woman he leaves behind, however, the feelings stirred by this sound generally strike at the heart of her relationship with him, whether she fights to sustain it or has given up hope.<sup>40</sup> Her emotions might range from worry,<sup>41</sup> melancholy,<sup>42</sup> or “wavering feelings” (*yaoqing* 搖情),<sup>43</sup> to heartbreak (*duanchang* 斷腸),<sup>44</sup> pain (*shang* 傷),<sup>45</sup> grief (*bei* 悲),<sup>46</sup> or resentment (*lien* 恨).<sup>47</sup> Given that the mere sound of pounding becomes evocative in the Tang dynasty, it is hardly surprising that one of the popular tune titles for Tang song lyrics is “Pounding Silk” (*Dao lianzi* 擣練子). Most of the lyrics do not concern happy relationships; in fact, many do not even describe women working with cloth but take on the broader subject of the sadness of parting.<sup>48</sup> By the tenth century, the theme of pounding cloth most often evoked sorrow.

At the same time that pounding cloth was becoming an aural image in Tang dynasty poetry, court painters seem to have been developing the subject as a fully realized pictorial theme. At least, later painting catalogues would have it so. In addition to the *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue*’s mention of a Zhang Xuan painting titled *Pounding Silk*, Ming and Qing dynasty catalogues describe a Zhou Fang painting titled *Pounding Cloth* (although of course the omission of this painting from earlier catalogues raises a number of problems).<sup>49</sup> There are two surviving well-known paintings on this theme from the Song dynasty—of which Huizong’s scroll is the earlier—and this is rather significant.<sup>50</sup> In Northern Song dynasty song lyric, pounding cloth and making winter clothing for soldiers—tropes that share many of the same presumptions—diminish as subject matter. Most often, mention of pounding cloth or of soldier’s clothing occurs only in passing, apparently more to set a melancholy mood than to explore the implications of this aspect of women’s work.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, during the same period, pounding cloth continues as an important erotic theme in painting. Perhaps this is because the scenario lends itself so well to visual interpretation. The women who do this

work are essentially performing manual labor, for pounding cloth constitutes more strenuous work than weaving or embroidery, and the nature of the activity provides an excuse for depicting female figures, worn out from their exertions, in disarray: their hair falling down, their sleeves pushed up, even perspiring. Their dishevelment would remind a viewer of how they would be likely to look after a sexual encounter, increasing their desirability. James J. Y. Liu has written that in Chinese poetry, “the effect of imagery often depends on symbolic significance and emotional associations rather than visual appeal.”<sup>52</sup> In painting, of course, the pictorial qualities of an image are crucial, though I would argue that this does not come at the expense of reading images as tropes with emotional resonance. This emphasis on the pictorial qualities of a poetic image may help to explain, in Song painting, the decline of mulberry girls and weavers (who had been prominent in early erotic poetry)<sup>53</sup> and the increasing popularity of women indulging their feelings of longing in a session of cloth-pounding. It is not difficult to picture a mulberry girl or a weaving maiden—the one with her basket in the mulberry grove, the other at her loom—and, in fact, they do appear in Song dynasty painting (see fig. 5 for an example of the latter), but perhaps because their movements are less apt as visual metaphors for love or longing, they tend to be shown as rural laborers.<sup>54</sup> A woman beating cloth, however, makes for an especially evocative visual image, as she typically uses a long pole and must put all her energy into the pounding. In Huizong’s scroll, beating silk is portrayed as one of the most exciting stages in making clothes.

### Emperors, Desire, and Allegory

The suggestive nature of an image of imperial concubines pounding silk makes this the perfect opening for *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*, if the painter wishes to underscore the women’s desire for the emperor. The phrase “pounding silk,” as Anne Birrell has pointed out, is a pun for another *dao lian* 擣戀, “pounding love.”<sup>55</sup> This interpretation also accords greater significance to the Chinese title of Huizong’s scroll, *Dao lian tu*: undoubtedly there was a reason for beginning with such a risqué activity and then titling the painting after it.<sup>56</sup> The subsequent image of two concubines sorting thread and sewing similarly accommodates the language of desire. The word for thread (*si* 絲) is a homonym for longing (*si* 思), and if the sewing concubine is making clothing for the emperor, one of the possibilities in palace sericulture, then the inclusion of this scene reiterates her vivid recall of the contours of his body. Finally, in the image of women ironing a bolt of cloth—a much less popular trope in erotic poetry—the use of hot coals may be significant. A Northern Song dynasty lyric by Zhou Bangyan 周邦彥 (1056–1121) suggests that coals and ashes can be metaphors for ardor: “She must see the old, dying coals



within the gold censer./ She won't willingly let her fond feelings/ become like those cold ashes" (金爐應見舊殘煤。莫使恩情容易，似寒灰。)<sup>57</sup> The heat of the coals in Huizong's scroll seems to indicate the burning passion that these women must feel for their absent object of desire. And because the word for a bolt of cloth (*pi* 疋) is a homonym for the word mate (*pi* 匹), the suggestion is that the women are longing for an absent husband.<sup>58</sup>

For a poem that suggests a context and setting similar to that of *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*, it is instructive to turn back to *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, the important early collection of palace-style poetry, to examine a poem titled "Pounding Cloth" by the Liang dynasty emperor Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502–549). It describes palace women of unclear status intricately made up and pounding and cutting cloth, with a brazier burning in the background. Although the poem implies a single speaking persona, it is distinctive for the conceit that multiple women join together to perform the work.

They say he rode north of the Yi waters.  
 I said goodbye north of the river.  
 Deep in longing for the unrelenting traveler,  
 I weave a dream in an empty bed.  
 Waking suddenly, colors swim before my eyes,  
 and I begin to be pained by fine white silk.  
 In Zhongzhou leaves fall from the trees,  
 and at the barriers frost must have come early.  
 Insects hide as the weather grows severe,  
 and grass in the courtyard turns yellow again.  
 A golden wind on the only clear night,  
 the bright moon suspended above inner chambers.  
 Slender and delicate, girls from this palace  
 assist me in preparing garments.  
 Irregular the rhythm of the poles at night,  
 mournful laments stirred by autumn stones.  
 Light gauze flying on jade wrists,  
 faint emerald on a base of red rouge,  
 in vermilion cheeks color already rising,  
 sidelong glances making eyes brighter.  
 Pounding with all our "not-a-stone"  
 a pattern of paired mandarin ducks,  
 gripping a golden knife for the cutting,  
 burning incense that smells like orchids.

Our reunion is long in coming,  
so I'll keep this to send to your cold country.  
Who is there to see my makeup?  
Longing for you makes one's heart bitter.

駕言易水北，送別河之陽。沈思慘行鑣，結夢在空牀。既寤丹綠謬，始知紈素傷。中州木葉下，邊城應早霜。陰蟲日慘烈，庭草復云黃。金風但清夜，明月懸洞房。嫋嫋同宮女，助我理衣裳。參差夕杵引，哀怨秋砧揚。輕羅飛玉腕，弱翠低紅妝。朱顏色已興，眄睇目增光。擣以一匪石，文成雙鴛鴦。制握斷金刀，薰用如蘭芳。佳期久不歸，持此寄寒鄉。妾身誰為容，思君苦人腸。<sup>59</sup>

This poem provides a preview of some of the notable aspects of Huizong's scroll. All of the labor is compressed into a single night, a poetic construct that does not reflect the time necessary for completion of each task, even if multiple women are working together. Both Wudi's poem and Huizong's scroll share a reliance on conventional themes to convey feelings. In Wudi's poem, the emphasis is on pounding cloth, an activity that the women carry out full of resolute feeling—"not-a-stone" acting as a kenning for the stalwart heart and alluding to the poem from the *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing* 詩經) in which the metaphor first appeared.<sup>60</sup> The poem is explicit about the protagonist's unhappiness, mentioning her longing, pain, bitterness, and how she hears "mournful laments" in the sound of poles striking stones. It also contains indirect cues of melancholy, through mentions of both autumn and moonlight; the latter makes for an especially poignant image in poetry about separated lovers. In addition, the speaking persona's failure to recognize her own face suggests that her sorrow is adversely affecting her appearance. The textile pattern of paired mandarin ducks in the poem is an ironic image given the lovers' separation, and at the same time represents the woman's hope that their love will last. Despite the participation of a group of women, the poem clarifies that the work is done for the benefit of one man, the protagonist's beloved.<sup>61</sup> Making clothes for a beloved traveler is an intimate and meaningful task. It is, of course, fitting that the participants are court ladies, considering that the imperial author might imagine himself as the recipient.

Similarly, in Emperor Huizong's painting, the identification of the figures as beautifully attired imperial concubines reiterates that they ought to be making clothes for their emperor, in labor born more of love or longing than of necessity. The viewer first sees four women pounding silk. Judging from their hairstyles, they are not maids (contradicting Yuan Haowen's description of the corresponding section of Zhang Xuan's lost painting). Their personal investment in the

process is apparent: the painter emphasizes this through the placement of their slender white hands, which invite contrast with the substantial wooden poles they hold. This attention to the women's hands serves to remind the viewer that their work is a pun for "pounding love." A similar emphasis on hands is seen in the next section, showing two concubines sorting thread and sewing. Here the graceful movement of their hands not only emphasizes their involvement in the work but also identifies that work, for the fine thread is not readily visible. In the section that shows women ironing, we see for the first time the assistance of younger girls: one seen from behind, who helps to hold up the length of cloth, and another fanning coals in the brazier. But two concubines hold the two ends of the roll of white silk, and a third concubine passes a pan of coals over the cloth. The littlest girl, playing beneath the cloth, adds a sense of whimsy to the painting, but more importantly serves as a foil for the labor of the women.

Other details reinforce this reading: for example, the combs that most of the concubines wear are made of spotted bamboo, a material that alludes to the longing of Emperor Shun's two wives, the Xiang River goddesses, for their lost husband; they shed tears of blood that permanently stained the bamboo growing by the river.<sup>62</sup> Here the subtle detail of spotted bamboo for the women's combs is especially appropriate if they are imperial consorts waiting to be summoned to their emperor's presence. The round fan held by the girl tending the coals bears an image of ducks by a snowy riverbank, a metaphor for enduring love. In addition, one of the concubines near the beginning of the scroll provides a gestural cue that indicates her desire. The fourth figure on the right briefly stops pounding cloth in order to meet the viewer's eye as she pulls up her sleeve, revealing her pale forearm. Her action recalls a couplet from a poem by Wang Jian 王建 (768–833), coincidentally (or perhaps not) titled "Song of Pounding Cloth" (*Dao yi qu* 擣衣曲): "Women and girls face each other and begin to work./ As they bare their white wrists, the mallets sing." (婦姑相對初力生，雙揎白腕調杵聲。) Again, this poem is notable for its emphasis on multiple women who come together to pound cloth. Wang Jian is known for writing a set of one hundred palace poems during the reign of Tang emperor Jingzong 敬宗 (r. 825–826); these poems claim secondhand knowledge of the activities that took place in the women's quarters at the palace.<sup>63</sup> In exposing her plump arm, the woman not only opens a usually covered part of her body to the viewer's gaze, but also discloses her status. Her skin is not coarsened by work and weathered by the sun, but is soft and white—the skin of a pampered court lady. If the viewer sees this figure as a coquette, then he understands that the labor has provided her with the perfect excuse for the seductive display of her arm. If the viewer believes the figure to be innocent of her gesture's effect, then the labor that leads her to pull up her sleeve makes her unwittingly vulnerable to



his gaze. This single figure clarifies the painter's awareness of the erotic subtext of the pictorial theme.

So, what are the references to eroticism found in *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* meant to convey? Let us return again to the problem of the identities of the women. The gesture of the woman pulling up her sleeve, precisely because of its boldness, may reiterate that she is a concubine.<sup>64</sup> Certainly poetic tradition does to some extent favor the image of an elite lady working with cloth, and it makes the labor of these women even more meaningful. However, the identification of the female figures in Huizong's scroll as imperial concubines may be important for another reason. Huizong already possessed Zhang Xuan's painting *Pounding Silk*, which may be a depiction of Minghuang's concubines. Presumably, the reason for making the copy had less to do with preserving or disseminating the composition—although that is in fact what it did—and more to do with taking Zhang Xuan's painting as a source for an update that could comment on Huizong's own time. A Tang dynasty painting of imperial concubines would have been a natural choice as a source for a painting meant to allude to Huizong's own concubines. Because we can assume that this scroll was produced directly for the emperor (if not literally by him),<sup>65</sup> the focal point of the concubines' longing and desire would appear to be Huizong himself. Perhaps Huizong projected himself as the object of their desire. Chinese erotic poetry, in fact, provides ample evidence for a rhetorical displacement of a man's desire or longing onto a female figure;<sup>66</sup> it is quite possible that *shinü hua* operate similarly. One can imagine what an appealing image this must have been on a personal level, with all sorts of implications for the emperor's virility, but it has potential political applications as well. One can interpret this painting of women desiring the emperor as one concerned with the allegory of the loyalty of the minister to the ruler. At least in poetry, reading heteroerotic longing or desire as inherently allegorical or political is a longstanding critical tradition, beginning with Han dynasty criticism of courtship poems from the *Book of Songs* and thereafter criticism of other collections of love poetry.<sup>67</sup> The usual situation concerns the loyalty of the minister or advisor; it would be somewhat problematic to imagine imperial concubines representing an allegory of the ordinary taxpaying Song citizen's loyalty to the emperor.<sup>68</sup>

It is certainly possible that Huizong could have commissioned this copy of Zhang Xuan's scroll with just such an allegorical interpretation in mind: possibly the best-known paintings to emerge from Huizong's court are the many images that record auspicious events, which fulfill the distinctly political function of affirming the correctness of Huizong's reign. One such work is *Five-Colored Parakeet on a Blossoming Apricot Tree*. The emperor's inscription on that painting emphasizes the bird's status as a good omen (because it is five-colored) and inti-

mates that it descended from heaven to the imperial precinct as a mark of divine favor, even as he acknowledges that he received it as tribute.<sup>69</sup> Maggie Bickford has defined the auspicious images as “designed to embody good outcomes, and sometimes to generate, attract, confirm, sustain, or prolong these outcomes,” and Peter Sturman has discussed them as designed to confirm Huizong’s fitness to rule.<sup>70</sup> These images of auspicious omens represent Huizong’s possession of the mandate of heaven and were likely displayed at court.<sup>71</sup> *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* may similarly—but perhaps more subtly—argue for the devotion and loyalty of Huizong’s advisors, even though one cannot assume that this painting served as a public image.

Huizong’s work in another field provides some assurances that the painting encodes both an erotic and an allegorical meaning. Ronald Egan’s study of Huizong’s palace poems points out how the emperor’s work in this genre represents a significant departure from earlier collections. Palace poems such as those written by Wang Jian and the tenth-century poet Huarui Furen 花蕊夫人 (Lady Blossom, in Egan’s translation) tended to focus on palace ladies, while Huizong’s take up many other topics as well. Egan argues that Huizong’s corpus is meant “to describe and exalt the virtue of Huizong’s palace and by implication his reign itself in all regards: its justice, wise governance, concern for the common people, divine blessings, restoration of ancient institutions, veneration of the classics, moderation, intimidation of alien powers, and aesthetic accomplishments.” Whereas Egan suggests that moving away from the palace lady as an exclusive subject helps to accomplish this goal, the fact that Huizong nevertheless continues to write about palace ladies indicates that they too can embody confirmations of his fitness to rule. And, indeed, Egan discusses those poems in precisely this manner:

Moving now to poems in Huizong’s collection that do concern palace women, [...] we come first to a large group of poems that treat ladies involved in conspicuously virtuous activities. These pieces are set in deliberate opposition to poems in earlier collections that dwell on the sheer beauty of the imperial concubines and the pampered opulence of their lives. Huizong is suggesting that his ladies are not content only to be fine looking or to indulge themselves in frivolous pastimes. They devote themselves to edifying and self-improving activities, or to those that perform some service inside the palace. Significantly, the ladies are positively averse to elaborate applications of powder and rouge.<sup>72</sup>

Reading this passage in light of *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* reaffirms the dual meaning that I have suggested for this painting. The reference to pal-



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Ma Hezhi (fl. ca. 1130–ca. 1170),  
“Common People,” chapter 5 and  
section 5 of the *Classic of Filial Piety  
for Girls*, Southern Song dynasty;  
handscroll, ink and color on silk,  
h.: 26.4 cm. National Palace  
Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

ace sericulture—which cannot be overlooked—allows the viewer to understand them as “conspicuously virtuous.” I have already mentioned that elite women sometimes practiced sericulture because of its connections with feminine virtue. These ideas were still current during the Song dynasty; after Huizong’s time, court painter Ma Hezhi 馬和之 (fl. ca. 1130–ca. 1170) preserved this close association between womanly work and feminine virtue in an illustrated version of the *Classic of Filial Piety for Girls* (*Nü xiao jing* 女孝經), with spinning and sewing portrayed as model activities for filial women of the working class (fig. 6).<sup>73</sup> Francesca Bray has suggested that a woman doing this sort of work embodied not only familial but also civic virtue;<sup>74</sup> if so, such an image could only reflect well on Huizong’s concubines and, by extension, on him.

At the same time, the choice of the most erotic aspects of the rite, and the seemingly incongruous emphasis on the women’s artificially heightened beauty, deepens the allegorical reading by opening up the possibility of representing the women’s desire. The absence from the painting of any male figure to represent the object of their desire would tend to encourage a male viewer to project himself as that object. If we can understand these women in Huizong’s scroll as imperial concubines, the male viewer implicated here is Huizong himself. Maggie Bickford, referring to Egan’s work, suggests that both Huizong’s palace poetry and his auspicious images were necessarily impersonal,<sup>75</sup> but presumably that would reflect the wider dissemination of those works. The references to desire in *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* suggest that it must have been a painting with a much more private function, but still one that veils its eroticism with a veneer of decorum.

Because of the association of this scroll with the patronage of Huizong, it seems quite natural that the painting should depict imperial concubines and their traditional activities. It is necessary, however, to recognize this as a meaningful choice on the part of the painter, a choice that reverberates with traditions of erotic poetry and also suggests this painting as a carefully crafted comment on the emperor himself. *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* is a painting of striking subtlety. Its references to palace sericulture allow a viewer, if he or she so chooses, to focus



on the virtuous qualities of Huizong's imperial concubines, tempering the erotic connotations of the theme. But those erotic connotations cannot be wholly suppressed, so well do they correspond to the tropes developed in palace-style poetry, music bureau poetry, and song lyric—in some cases even seeming to cite certain poetic lines. This allows the viewer to further read this painting as a representation of the concubines' desire for the emperor, calling to mind the allegorical interpretations of such poetic themes. As such, Huizong's scroll stands as a double-edged comment on his fitness as ruler, one that takes a Tang dynasty image of elite women's longing and bends it to the will of the Northern Song emperor.

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## NOTES

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1. One of the first essays to point out the connections between paintings of women and the tradition of erotic poetry known as palace-style poetry is Ellen Johnston Laing's "Chinese Palace-Style Poetry and the Depiction of A Palace Beauty," *Art Bulletin* 72, no. 1 (March 1990): 284–95. My work on this topic is greatly indebted to hers.
2. Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997), 143 n. 1.
3. Facsimiles of these four seals appear in Victoria Contag and Wang Ch'i-Ch'ien, *Seals of Chinese Painters and Collectors of the Ming and Ch'ing Periods, Reproduced in Facsimile Size and Deciphered*, rev. ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1966), 665. A fifth seal reading *Mingchang yulan* 明昌御覽 can be seen mounted after the painting, but its impression does not match that of the seal pictured in Contag and Wang. For identifications of eight seals used by Zhangzong (and a mention of seven appearing on this painting), see Tseng Yu-Ho Ecke, "Emperor Hui Tsung, the Artist, 1082–1136" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1972), 25, 137, 138.
4. Maggie Bickford, "Huizong's Paintings: Art and the Art of Emperorship," in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Maggie Bickford (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 498–513.
5. Bickford notes which paintings tend to bear Huizong's inscription and cipher and how they functioned as "works of state" in "Huizong's Paintings," 457, 466, 471–72, 485, 488–89, 498–513.
6. Maggie Bickford, "Emperor Huizong and the Aesthetic of Agency," *Archives of Asian Art* 53 (2002–2003): 76.
7. *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜, ed. Yang Jialuo 楊家駱 (hereafter, XHHP) (1120; reprint, Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1967), 5.157. In addition to *Pounding Silk*, the catalogue records two scrolls titled *Palace Women* (*Gongnü tu er* 宮女圖二).
8. Wu Hung, in an essay focusing on Ming and Qing dynasty paintings, discusses

- the many aspects of the idealized beauty in those periods and the difficulty of distinguishing such a figure from a representation of courtesans or concubines in “Beyond Stereotypes: The Twelve Beauties in Qing Court Art and the ‘Dream of the Red Chamber,’” in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ellen Widmer and Kang-i Sun Chang (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 306–307, 322–30, 350–51.
9. For a thorough discussion of the pictorial themes depicting Minghuang and Yang Guifei, see Elizabeth Marie Owen, “Love Lost: Qian Xuan (c. 1235–c. 1307) and Images of Emperor Ming Huang and Yang Guifei” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2005), 12–122.
  10. XHHP, 5.154–59, 5.160–62, 6.166–73, 6.176.
  11. Yuan Haowen, *Yuan Haowen quanji* 元好問全集, 2 vols. (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1990), 1:34.771–73. The *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue* does not record a set of scrolls by Zhang Xuan titled *Four Scenes of Palace Women*, although as noted above it did include two paintings titled simply *Palace Women*. XHHP, 5.155–56.
  12. I Lo-fen [Yi Ruofen] 衣若芬 suggests that Zhang Xuan’s original painting was based on the first of five poems titled “Chang xin qiu ci 長信秋詞” (Autumn song of enduring trust) by Wang Changling 王昌齡 (ca. 698–757), as it includes the line cited in the *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue* that Yuan Haowen mentions. See I Lo-fen, “Guiyuan yu xiangsi: Mou Yi Daoyi tu de jiedu 閨怨與相思：牟益『擣衣圖』的解讀” (Melancholy longings of the boudoir: A reading of Mou Yi’s painting “Pounding Cloth”), *Zhongguo Wenzhe Yanjiu Jikan* 中國文哲研究季刊, no. 25 (September 2004): 37; and XHHP, 5.155–56. Wang’s poem appears in Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645–1719) et al., ed., *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (hereafter, QTS), 12 vols. (reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 2:143.1445. In actuality, Yuan Haowen’s description suggests that if Zhang Xuan indeed used Wang Changling’s poem as a source, he only used the imagery of the poem’s first line, as the rest of the poem describes a scenario that Zhang Xuan does not seem to illustrate.
  13. For more on *Resentment at the Changmen Palace*, apparently the title of a song lyric, see Zhu Jingxuan 朱景玄 (fl. ca. 806–40), *Tangchao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄, ed. Wen Zhaotong 溫肇桐 (ca. 840; reprint, Chengdu: Sichuan meishu chubanshe, 1985), 22; cf. William Reynolds Beal Acker, trans., *Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 2: 249. The *Xuanhe Painting Catalogue* passage describing *Resentment at the Changmen Palace* appears in Zhang Xuan’s biography, but no painting of that title is listed at the end of the entry on Zhang Xuan; XHHP, 5.155–59.
  14. I am grateful to Shuen-fu Lin for help with this translation.
  15. For the use of *neiren* as an official title for an imperial concubine within the context of the palace, see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), s.v. 4192 *nei-jen*. He writes that in the Zhou dynasty, a woman with the status of *neiren*, which he translates simply as “palace woman,” was a “[member] of one of the Nine Concubine Groups [...] resident in the royal palace in the service of the ruler and his principal wives.”
  16. Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 142.
  17. Tu T’ung [Wu Tung] 吳同, “Zhangzong ti Tianshui mo Zhang Xuan Guoguo Furen you chun tu xiao kao 章宗題天水摹張萱虢國夫人遊春圖小考” (A study of T’ian Shui’s tracing copy of the *Spring Outing of Madam Kuo-Kuo* by Chang Hsüan), in International Colloquium on Chinese Art History, *Proceedings* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1991), 1:4; and Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 143.
  18. Howard Rogers, “Second Thoughts on Multiple Recensions,” *Kaikodo Journal*, no. 5 (Autumn 1997): 46–62.
  19. Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), “Liaoling, nian nügong zhi lao ye 繚綾·念女工之勞也” (Liaoling silk—Commemorating the tribulations of womanly work), in QTS, 7:427.4704, and in Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩, ed., *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (hereafter, YFSJ), 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 4:99.1380 (under title “Liaoling”); cf. Burton Watson, ed. and trans., *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 245–46. See also Wang Jian 王建 (768–833), “Dang chuang zhi 當窗織” (Weaving at the window), in QTS, 5:298.3380; cf. trans. by William H. Nienhauser in Liu Wu-chi and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds., *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1976), 192–93.
  20. Francesca Bray cites the *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記, dating to the Zhou and Han dynasties) as one such source in *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 188–89. In addition, the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhou li* 周禮, dating to the late Zhou or early Han dynasties) includes a line that reads: “Making silk and hemp cloth is a wife’s merit.” (治絲麻以成之，謂之婦功。) “Dongguan kao gong ji 冬官考工記,” in *Zhou li zhu shu* 禮記注疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1815), 39.594 (available at <<http://www.sinica.edu.tw/ftms-bin/ftmsw3>>).



21. For more on the gendered division of labor in China, see Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 183–205; and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 131–51.
22. Priscilla Ching Chung, *Palace Women in the Northern Sung: 960–1126* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 10–18, 91–102, 111. I am grateful to Beverly Bossler for encouraging me to look more closely at the kinds of work performed by palace women during the Northern Song dynasty.
23. Wu Tung discusses this possibility in *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 142. See also Wu Hung, “The Origins of Chinese Painting (Paleolithic Period to Tang Dynasty),” in Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997), 76.
24. The texts include *Monthly Ordinances* (*Yue ling* 月令, before 240 BCE), the *Book of Rites*, the *Rites of Zhou*, *Han History* (*Han shu* 漢書, 1st cent. CE), *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (*Baihu tongyi* 白虎通義, 1st cent. CE), *Han Old Observances* (*Han jiu yi* 漢舊儀, ca. 25–27 CE), *Han Observances* (*Han yi* 漢儀, ca. 251 CE), *Sui History* (*Sui shu* 隋書, 6th–7th cent.), and *Jin History* (*Jin shu* 晉書, 6th–7th cent.). Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances during the Han Dynasty, 206 BC–AD 220* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 263–72.
25. Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China*, 264.
26. Some of the extant Song paintings of sericulture mean to accentuate political and economic concerns about taxation and the demands of women’s work. For a discussion of such paintings, see Roslyn Lee Hammers, “The Production of Good Government: Images of Agrarian Labor in Southern Song (1127–1279) and Yuan (1272/79–1368) China” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 2002); also, idem., “The Fabrication of Good Government: Images of Southern Song and Yuan Silk Production in China,” in Textile Society of America, *Creating Textiles: Makers, Methods, Markets* (Earlville, Md.: The Society, 1999).
27. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), s.v. “fulling, *vbl. n.*3”; available at <http://dictionary.oed.com>. I am grateful to Mary-Louise Totton for her explanation of this technique.
28. Ulla Cyrus-Zetterström, *Textile Terminology: Chinese-English-French-Swedish* (Borås, Sweden: Centraltryckeriet Åke Svenson AB, 1995), s.v. *dao lian*; I am grateful to Roslyn Hammers for directing me to this resource. Angela Yu-yun Sheng, “Textile Use, Technology, and Change in Rural Textile Production in Song China (960–1279)” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 52–53; Sheng notes that *lian* referred to degummed silk, but she suggests that by the Song dynasty the removal of gum was accomplished by boiling in an ash solution and steeping in a lard soap solution, with no mention of pounding the silk with mallets. Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, ed., *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (hereafter, HYDCD), 12 vols. and an index (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1986), s.v. *dao yi*.
29. For these alternate interpretations, see Cyber-Zetterström, *Textile Terminology*, s.v. *dao lian*, and HYDCD, s.v. *dao yi*.
30. “Qingyang du 青陽度” (Qingyang ford, 2/3), in YFSJ, 3:49.711; cf. Burton Watson, trans., *Chinese Lyricism: Shih Poetry from the Second to the Twelfth Century, with Translations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 61.
31. Anne Birrell writes that “the word for the fulling tool used to pound silk fibres (love) was a complicated pun for a husband or lover,” but doesn’t tell the basis for the pun. See Anne M. Birrell, trans., *New Songs from a Jade Terrace: An Anthology of Early Chinese Love Poetry, Translated with Annotations and an Introduction* (London, Boston, and Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 21.
32. See, for example, Song Qici 宋齊辭 (fl. Jin), “Qiu ge shiba shou 秋歌十八首” (Autumn songs, eighteen poems, 16/18), from *Ziye sishi ge qishi wu shou* 子夜四時歌七十五首 (Ziye songs for the four seasons, 75 poems), in YFSJ, 2:44.648; Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (397–433), “Dao yi” (Pounding cloth), in Xu Ling 徐陵, comp., *Jian zhu “Yutai xinyong”* 箋注玉臺新詠 (hereafter, YTXY) (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1967), 3.16a–b; and Liu Yun 柳惲 (465–511), “Dao yi shi yi shou 擣衣詩一首” (Pounding cloth, one poem), in YTXY, 5.10b–11b.
33. Meng Jiangnü’s husband, Qi Liang 杞梁, had been conscripted to help build the Great Wall. Because he counted on the government to provide him with clothing, he took no winter clothes with him. Meng Jiangnü, presumably worried that the state would not clothe him with the care that she would, makes him some winter-weight clothing and takes the garments to the site herself. There she discovers, to her grief, that her husband is not only dead but also buried in the Wall. These elements of the story are recounted in Marsha L. Wagner, *The Lotus Boat: The Origins of Chinese “Tz’u” Poetry in T’ang Popular Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 94. For more details, see Jao Tsung-i [Rao Zongyi] 饒宗頤 and Paul Demiéville, *Airs de Touen-houang (Touen-houang k’iu 敦煌曲)* (Paris: Editions du Centre

- National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971), 59; Arthur Waley, trans., *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang: An Anthology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 145–49; Wang Ch'iu-kuei, “The Formation of the Early Versions of the Meng Chiang-nü Story,” *Tamkang Review* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 111–40. For later poetic citations of the legend, see “Meng Jiangnü,” Tune: “Dao lianzi 擣練子” (Pounding silk, 1/4 and 3/4), Dunhuang nos. P. 3911, P. 2809 and P. 3319, in Ren Bantang 任半塘 [Ren Na 任訥], ed., *Dunhuang geci zongbian* 敦煌歌詞總編 (hereafter, DHGC), 3 vols. (reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 2:3.549; cf. trans. by Wagner in *The Lotus Boat*, 94–95.
34. Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), “Ye ting dao yi yi shou 夜聽擣衣一首” (Listening to someone pounding cloth at night, one poem); Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503–551) [Emperor Jianwendi of the Liang 梁簡文帝, r. 549–551], “Qiu gui ye si 秋閨夜思” (Night thoughts in an autumn bedroom), in YTXY, 3.12a–b; 7.14a–b; cf. trans. by Birrell in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 101, 194; Maureen Robertson, “Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China,” *Late Imperial China* 13, no. 1 (June 1992): 71.
35. In a poem by Qiao Zhizhi 喬知之 (n.d.), “Cong jun xing 從軍行” (Urging a soldier to travel), the separation has lasted ten years; YFSJ, 2:33.485.
36. Bao Linghui 鮑令暉 (fl. ca. 464), “Ti shu hou ji xingren 題書後寄行人” (Poem sent to a traveler), in YTXY, 4.12a; cf. trans. by Birrell in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 123.
37. Fei Chang 費昶 (fl. ca. 510), “Hua guan sheng zhongye wen cheng wai dao yi 華觀省中夜聞城外擣衣” (Hearing someone pounding cloth beyond the wall at midnight), in YTXY, 6.12b–13b; cf. trans. by Birrell in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 173–74.
38. For poems that use pounding cloth primarily to suggest longing, see Wang Sengru 王僧孺 (465–522), “Dao yi” (Pounding cloth), and Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (507–555) [Emperor Yuandi of the Liang 梁元帝, r. 555], “Han xiao san yun 寒宵三韻” (Cold night, three rhymes), in YTXY, 6.7b–8a; 7.22b; cf. trans. by Birrell in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 167, 203. For a short poem that uses the image of cloth-pounding to set a sorrowful tone, see Jiang Hong 江洪 (fl. ca. 502), “Qiu feng er shou 秋風二首” (Autumn wind, two poems, 2/2), in YTXY, 10.12a; cf. trans. by Birrell in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 277.
39. Liu Changqing 劉長卿 (709–780?), “Yugan lushe 餘干旅舍” (At an inn in Yugan) in QTS, 3:147.1493; cf. trans. by William H. Nienhauser in Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*, 116. Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), “Qiu xing ba shou 秋興八首” (Autumn thoughts, eight poems, 1/8), in QTS, 4:230.2509; cf. trans. by Wu-chi Liu in Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*, 141. Liu interprets the activity as the “pounding of the evening wash.”
40. Nevertheless, not all the poems dealing with the effect of the sound on a female persona focus on her emotions regarding an absent man: they can also reflect her empathy for another woman. See Li Bai 李白 (701–762), “Bayue ge 八月歌” (Song of the eighth month), from *Yuejie zhe yangliu ge shisan shou* 月節折楊柳歌十三首 (Songs of cutting a willow branch for different months, thirteen poems, 8/13), in YFSJ, 3:49.723.
41. Li Bai, “Qiu ge 秋歌” (Autumn song), from *Ziye sisli ge si shou* 子夜四時歌四首 (Ziye songs for the four seasons, four poems), in YFSJ, 2:45.653; cf. trans. by Watson in *Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*, 207. No word for worry is explicitly used, but that is the tenor of the woman’s feeling.
42. “Zhengfu Lou Zai 征夫數載” (Soldier Lou Zai), Tune: “Feng gui yun 鳳歸雲” (Phoenix returning to the clouds), Dunhuang nos. S. 1441 and P. 2838, in DHGC, 1:1.58; cf. Kang-i Sun Chang, trans., *The Evolution of Chinese Tz’u Poetry: From Late T’ang to Northern Sung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), appendix 2, 213. Based on the Dunhuang manuscripts in which it appears, the poem probably belongs to the *Yunyao ji* 雲謠集 and may date to the High Tang period; Wagner, *The Lotus Boat*, 74. See also “Bian shi rongyi 邊使戎衣” (Sending a soldier’s clothes to the frontier), Tune: “Shier yue 十二月” (Twelve months), Dunhuang no. P. 3812, in DHGC, 3:5.1263–64.
43. Zhang Ruoxu 張若虛 (fl. 710–727), “Chun jiang hua yue ye er shou 春江花月夜二首” (Flowers by the river on a moonlit night in spring, two poems), in YFSJ, 2:47.679.
44. Liu Changqing, “Yue xia ting zhen 月下聽砧” (Listening to pounding stones beneath the moon), in QTS, 3:148.1524; cf. trans. by Dell R. Hales in Liu and Lo, *Sunflower Splendor*, 117. Hales interprets the pounding stones as a washblock.
45. In a Tang poem by Wang Bo 王勃, “Qiu ye chang 秋夜長” (Autumn nights are long), a woman is “wounded by longing” (*si zi shang* 思自傷); YFSJ, 3:76.1071.
46. Tune: “Dao yi sheng 擣衣聲” (The sound of pounding cloth), Dunhuang no. S. 2607, in DHGC, 1:2.309.
47. “Shu ke liulang 戍客流浪” (Roaming soldier), Tune: “Dong xian ge 洞仙歌” (Song of a cave immortal), Dunhuang no. S. 1441, in DHGC 1:1.157. This poem may have belonged to the *Yunyao ji*.
48. See, for example, “Meng Jiangnü,” Tune: “Dao lianzi,” Dunhuang no. P. 3718, in

- DHGC, 2:3.563–64. An exception is a cycle of lyrics titled “Meng Jiangnǚ,” Tune: “Dao lianzi” (3/4), Dunhuang nos. P. 3911, P. 2809, and P. 3319, in DHGC, 2:3.549; cf. trans. by Wagner in *The Lotus Boat*, 94–95.
49. Wang Keyu 汪珂玉 (b. 1587), *Shanhu wang hua lu* 珊瑚網畫錄 (1643), 23.46b; Bian Yongyu 卞永譽 (1645–1712), comp., *Shigu tang hua kao* 式古堂畫攷 (1682), 2.116; Sun Yuepan 孫岳頒, comp., *Peiwen zhai shuhua pu* 佩文齋書畫譜 (Beijing: Neifu, Kangxi reign period of the Qing dynasty [1708–22]), 98.37a; Li Diaoyuan 李調元 (1717–1795), *Zhujia cang hua bu* 諸家藏畫簿 (1778), 10.5b.
  50. The second painting is Mou Yi 牟益 (ca. 1178–ca. 1243), *Pounding Cloth* (*Dao yi tu* 擣衣圖), Southern Song dynasty, 1240; handscroll, ink on paper, 27.1 x 466.4 cm, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C. It is reproduced in National Palace Museum, *Catalogue to the Treasured Paintings and Calligraphic Works in the National Palace Museum* (*Gugong shuhua jinghua teji* 故宮書畫菁華特輯), trans. Donald E. Brix (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1996), 126–30.
  51. For lyrics about pounding cloth, see Yan Jidao 晏幾道 (fl. ca. 1105), Tune: “Shaonian you 少年游” (Wandering youth, 4/5), in Tang Guizhang 唐圭章, ed., *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞 (hereafter, QSC), 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 1:247. Attributed to Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1081–ca. 1144), “Xing xiangzi 行香子” (You move in fragrance), trans. Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, in *Li Ch’ing-chao: Complete Poems* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1979), 29. The theme also persisted in tune titles, as in Han Wei 韓維 (1017–1098), Tune: “Hu dao lian ling 胡搗練令” (Song of nomads pounding silk), in QSC, 1:198. For lyrics about soldiers’ clothing, see Xia Song 夏竦 (984–1050), Tune: “Zhegu tian 鷓鴣天” (Partridge sky), and Li Zhiyi 李之儀 (fl. ca. 1113–1117), Tune: “Lin jiang xian 臨江仙” (Immortal by the river, 1/2), in QSC, 1:9, 352. In a few poems, the theme is more thoroughly referenced, as in a lyric wherein a beauty remembers that she has not yet pounded her soldier’s clothing, so she takes up the mallet as her tears fall; Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), Tune: “Shui long yin 水龍吟” (Water dragon’s chant, 2/2), in QSC, 1:330.
  52. James J. Y. Liu, *The Interlingual Critic: Interpreting Chinese Poetry* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982), 47.
  53. Mulberry girls and weaving maids appear throughout *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*. For more on mulberry girls, see Joseph Roe Allen, III, “From Saint to Singing Girl: The Rewriting of Lo-fu Narrative in Chinese Literati Poetry,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48, no. 2 (December 1988): 321–61.
  54. For another image of what appears to be women harvesting mulberry leaves in a Song dynasty painting, see the painting attributed to Ma Hezhi 馬和之 (fl. ca. 1130–ca. 1170), *The Seventh Month*, from the *Odes of the State of Bin*; handscroll, ink, color, gold, and silver on silk, 27.6 x 722.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1973.121.3); it is reproduced in Wen C. Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 8th–14th Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pl. 28a.
  55. Birrell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 21.
  56. Wu Tung notes that it is commonplace to title a painting after its opening scene. See Wu, *Tales from the Land of Dragons*, 141.
  57. Zhou Bangyan, Tune: “Yu meiren 虞美人” (The beautiful Lady Yu, 1/3), in QSC, 2:618; cf. trans. by Irving Y. Lo in Liu and Lo, eds., *Sunflower Splendor*, 363.
  58. Ronald C. Miao, “Palace-Style Poetry: The Courtly Treatment of Glamour and Love,” in *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Ronald C. Miao (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1978), 15–16.
  59. Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464–549) [Emperor Wudi of the Liang 梁武帝, r. 502–549], “Dao yi” (Pounding cloth), in YTXY, 7.1a–b; cf. trans. by Birrell in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 182. I am grateful to Shuen-fu Lin for help with this translation.
  60. Anne Birrell points this out in *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 321. The poem is “Bo zhou 柏舟” (Cypress boat), and the relevant couplet reads, “My heart is not a stone—you cannot turn it.” (我心匪石，不可轉也。) Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), ed., *Shi jing jizhu* 詩經集注 (reprint, Taipei: Wanjuan lou tushu, 1996), 2.13; cf. Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1987), 71.
  61. Another poem that describes multiple women working together to make clothes, but all apparently experiencing longing for an absent man or men, is Xie Huilian’s “Pounding Cloth,” YTXY, 3.16a–b; cf. trans. by Watson in *Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*, 176.
  62. An early reference to this myth is found in Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300), *Bowu zhi* 博物志, ed. Zhou Riyong 周日用 (reprint, Taipei: Yiwen, ca. 1950), 10.2a.
  63. Wang Jian, “Dao yi qu,” in YFSJ, 4:94.1317. For more on his palace poems, see Ronald Egan, “Huizong’s Palace Poems,” in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China*, 362–63. For the Chinese text of his palace poems, see QTS, 6:302.3439–46.
  64. Although writing of a later period, Wu Hung, drawing upon the work of James Cahill and Ellen Johnston Laing,



- suggests that a picture of a courtesan or concubine could be identified through the inclusion of gestures and symbols that make her sexual accessibility unmistakable. See Wu, "Beyond Stereotypes," 350–51.
65. Of course, if one can believe the traditional attribution of the copy to Huizong's brush, one cannot rule out the idea that Huizong may have been using Zhang Xuan's work as a means of perfecting his own painting technique.
  66. For discussions of how projection works in Chinese poetry, see Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 240; Wai-ye Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 42; Paul F. Rouzer, *Writing Another's Dream: The Poetry of Wen Tingyun* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 73–74; Anne M. Birrell, "The Dusty Mirror: Courtly Portraits of Woman in Southern Dynasties Love Poetry," in *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, ed. Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 67; Grace S. Fong, "Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song," in *Voices of the Song Lyric in China*, 114; Florence Chia-ying Yeh, "Ambiguity and the Female Voice in 'Hua-chien Songs,'" in *Studies in Chinese Poetry*, by James R. Hightower and Florence Chia-ying Yeh (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), 346; and Maija Bell Samei, *Gendered Persona and Poetic Voice: The Abandoned Woman in Early Chinese Song Lyrics* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), 7, 10, 36 n. 11.
  67. For a study of allegorical interpretations of early Chinese poetry, see Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). In the Southern Song dynasty, poets begin to employ the form of the song lyric, previously associated almost exclusively with erotic subjects, for the purposes of making veiled political commentary. Chia-ying Yeh Chao, "The Ch'ang-chou School of Tz'u Criticism," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature: Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, ed. Adele Austin Rickett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 166–67. For a discussion of how one Song dynasty painting of women might function as a political comment, see Jerome Silbergeld, *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 135, 140.
  68. On the other hand, this cannot be entirely ruled out: Ronald Egan, in a discussion of Wang Jian's ninth-century palace poems, suggests that imperial concubines fascinated because they were ordinary people transported to a life of privilege. See Egan, "Huizong's Palace Poems," 364.
  69. Bickford analyzes this painting in "Emperor Huizong and the Aesthetic of Agency," 79–81. For a translation of the inscription, see Robert E. Harist, Jr., "Ch'ien Hsüan's Pear Blossoms: The Tradition of Flower Painting and Poetry from Sung to Yüan," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 22 (1987): 55.
  70. In addition to auspicious omen paintings, Bickford describes auspicious presentation paintings. An example of the latter is Huizong's *Birds on a Blossoming Wax-Plum Tree*, which may have been intended for presentation on an auspicious occasion. See Bickford, "Emperor Huizong and the Aesthetic of Agency," 72–73, 89. Sturman suggests that the auspicious images were not made in response to any particular political crisis, and he also notes that "When it comes to self-confirmation [. . .] nothing convinces like a picture [. . .]"; see Peter C. Sturman, "Cranes above Kaifeng: The Auspicious Image at the Court of Huizong," *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990): 35, 36, 41.
  71. Bickford, "Huizong's Paintings," 485.
  72. Egan, "Huizong's Palace Poems," 382–83, 387–88.
  73. The painting is attributed to Ma Hezhi, "Common People," chapter/section 5 of the *Classic of Filial Piety for Girls*; handscroll, ink and color on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei. For a discussion and additional illustrations of this painting, see Julia K. Murray, "Didactic Art for Women: The Ladies' *Classic of Filial Piety*," in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 27–53. The text of the *Classic of Filial Piety for Girls* dates between the mid-Tang dynasty and the Northern Song dynasty, and chapter 5 mentions both spinning and sewing; Julia K. Murray discusses the date of the text and translates it in idem., "The Ladies' *Classic of Filial Piety* and Sung Textual Illustration: Problems of Reconstruction and Artistic Context," *Ars Orientalis* 18 (1988): 95–129.
  74. Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 242.
  75. Bickford, "Huizong's Paintings," 484.



## VISUAL EXPERIENCE IN LATE MING SUZHOU 'HONORIFIC' AND 'FAMOUS SITES' PAINTINGS

### Abstract

Painters of late Ming Suzhou developed a distinctive topographical vocabulary and site-specific views to distinguish certain visual experiences. This study examines two types of Suzhou place paintings to clarify the particular visual experiences they conveyed to a range of seventeenth-century viewers. "Honorific" paintings present a bird's-eye survey of significant sites under the jurisdiction of an eminent official. Paintings of "famous sites" capture a synopsis of views experienced in a tour of the sites and lent the fame of their subject matter and inscribers to the owners. Although both categories of site paintings are well known, the visual experiences they present are not, as they are often misidentified or simply labeled "landscapes." This study seeks to identify and understand the different histories and regimes of visibility these two types of Suzhou place paintings represented for contemporary viewers.

SUZHOU HAS LONG BEEN A RICH SOUTHERN CITY with a legendary artistic tradition, and a large number of late Ming dynasty (1368–1644) paintings of specific sites in Suzhou by professional artists such as Yuan Shangtong (1570–after 1661), Zhang Hong (1580–after 1650), and Qian Gong (fl. ca. 1573–1619) are still extant in museums and private collections in Asia and the West. Yet the answers to questions concerning the visual experience represented in these works and their social functions—which would entail identifying the view or visual experience of the specific site depicted and what it is meant to convey—have only begun to be explored. James Cahill has offered some preliminary criteria for categorizing paintings of particular places, such as Mount Huang, and the works of individual painters, particularly Zhang Hong.<sup>1</sup> In her work on Tang Yin (1470–1524), Anne de Coursey Clapp has examined the style, function, and social milieu of individual paintings of places by a specific artist, while Li-tsui Flora Fu, in her work on paintings of famous mountains, discusses groups of paintings of specific sites.<sup>2</sup> Although Cahill has also suggested "the Suzhou masters, not their scholar-amateur contemporaries," were "the artists of their time who best achieved the lyric ideal of portraying a scene as if observed, and responses to it as if felt, immediately by a living individual, instead of as quotations from some remote past," little analysis has been done of Suzhou place paintings. Yet, the audience for these paintings is routinely assumed to have been tourists, and the paintings themselves continue to be variously described as having "the character of picture-maps," as illustrations of "tourist attractions," as "saleable" works "within the context of upper-class tourism," and as "souvenirs."<sup>3</sup> In some cases, these assumptions may be correct. However, the sheer number of extant place paintings suggests that, for many viewers,



they were useful mechanisms in the construction of a variety of visual memories of specific natural and constructed sites, indicative of the many layers of China's cultural history and its syncretic beliefs. This study seeks to understand the different histories and regimes of visibility Suzhou place paintings represent, in an attempt to further "socialize the vision" of seventeenth-century viewers.<sup>4</sup>

I examine two types of Suzhou place paintings to clarify the specific visual experiences they conveyed to a range of seventeenth-century viewers. What I call "honorific" paintings present a bird's-eye survey of significant sites under the jurisdiction of an eminent official. Paintings of "famous sites" capture a synopsis of views experienced in a tour of the sites and lent the fame of their subject matter and inscribers to the owners. Although both categories of site paintings are well known to art historians, museum curators, dealers, and auction house specialists, the visual experiences they present are not, as they are often misidentified or simply labeled "landscapes."

### Methodology

Scholars' lack of agreement as to what to call place paintings evinces the present undefined nature of the works in secondary studies. "Topographical painting" is a term much disputed, as both inappropriate to Chinese painters' renderings of real places, yet useful to discussions of such paintings. In his study of travel themes from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, Kenneth Ganza calls the term "an unsatisfactory classifier because it presupposes that the subject landscape is portrayed in a topography-conscious manner." He puts forward the term "toponymic" as more appropriate to paintings of this type in that it "states only that the artist based the painting on a specific place that he names in the title and thus leaves the door open for inquiry about the artistic aspects of the painting."<sup>5</sup> Eugene Wang has observed that there is "no exact equivalent in Chinese to the Greek word *topos* that conveniently collapses the dual senses of locus and topic," but suggests the word *ji* (site, trace, vestige) may hold similar meanings.<sup>6</sup> James Cahill has used "topographical painting" to designate "representations of particular places and paintings presenting stages in a journey to some particular place."<sup>7</sup> I will follow the precedent set by writers such as Kathlyn Liscomb and Joseph McDermott, who have avoided the pitfalls of terminology altogether by referring to them as paintings of the sites they depict, such as "paintings of Beijing," "paintings of Mount Hua," or "paintings of Mount Huang."<sup>8</sup>

The frontispieces, titles, and inscriptions the painters and colophonists wrote for the Suzhou place paintings discussed below focus on the place and experience illustrated. The locale depicted is clearly identified in every painting. Some inscribers identify the exact site and location illustrated, as in *Departing at Day-*



MAP 1 Suzhou place painting sites

break at Jinchang and Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven. Others add an identification of the climatic conditions in which the site is viewed, as in *Mist and Rain over Stone Lake* and *Spring Dawn at Panchi*. A few writers have emphasized the established reputation of some of the locations illustrated by employing the term *ming-sheng* (famous sites), an abbreviation of *mingshan shengdi* (famous mountains or unexcelled places) that was often applied in gazetteers and books as a geographical subheading in religious, literary, and political discussions of the history of scenic sites and institutions.<sup>9</sup> Following the identification of the particular site—be it a specific area around a city gate, a famous monastery in snow, or a local lake in the rainy season—inscribers often conclude the title with the vision-oriented classifier *jing*. The term *jing* has been translated as “vista,” “view,” or “prospect” by Susan Naquin; “prospect” by Timothy Brook; “scene” by Jonathan Chaves and Stephen Owen; and “visual experience” by Siu-Kit Wong.<sup>10</sup> A combination of Wong and Owen’s definitions of *jing* as a “visual experience” and “a scene perceived from a particular place at a particular time, thus implying the ‘point of view’ of a subject,” is most useful for understanding place paintings.<sup>11</sup>

All Chinese landscape paintings depict visual experience and are constructed of one or many *jing*. The act of viewing and the scene viewed enliven one another to create *jing*, or visual experience, as the seventeenth-century travel writer Xu Xiake (1587–1641) explains in his introduction to a gazetteer: “The outward manifestations of a mountain’s scenes are its peaks and caves. A scene is created when a passer-by chances upon it: once transmitted through his emotions, it is made distinct.”<sup>12</sup> For writers such as Xu Xiake, *jing* were “tied in with the idea of developing and even creating a site, through the medium of literature.”<sup>13</sup> For painters, the sympathetic response of viewer and viewed had to be relayed through a visual structuring of the site represented. I suggest that the two dynamically interactive points of visual experience, the act of viewing and the scene viewed, are constructed in Suzhou place paintings. In paintings of specific places, the subject matter, style, and paratexts had to be carefully calibrated to visually relay the specific physical, psychological, and social experiences of specific people. The painted perspective of the locale reflects the location of the viewer, and the individual components that define the illustrated site echo the interests and experiences of the observer.

The other participants, in painted form or as paratext writers, provide the social milieu in which the spectator visits the site. To interpret these paintings as scenes perceived from a particular place at a particular time by a particular person or group of people, I will rely on the physical “point of view” of a visitor to these sites. I will discuss them as they exist now, as I experienced them, taking into account that some have been geologically and culturally altered by time, and I will attempt to qualify my experience with written reports from seventeenth-century and modern writers. I will then compare the topography and physical experience of the actual sites to their respective paintings in an attempt to recreate the implied position of historical viewers to the paintings and the structured viewing experience the paintings presented to viewers.

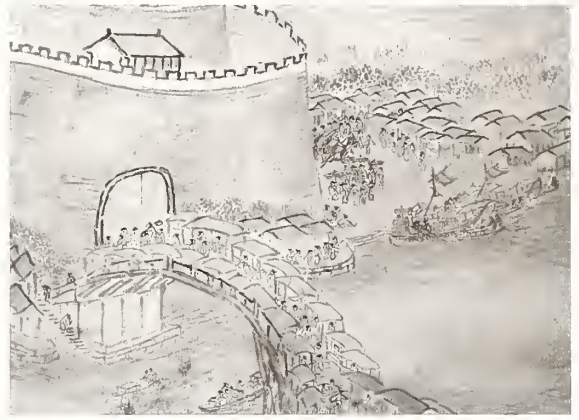
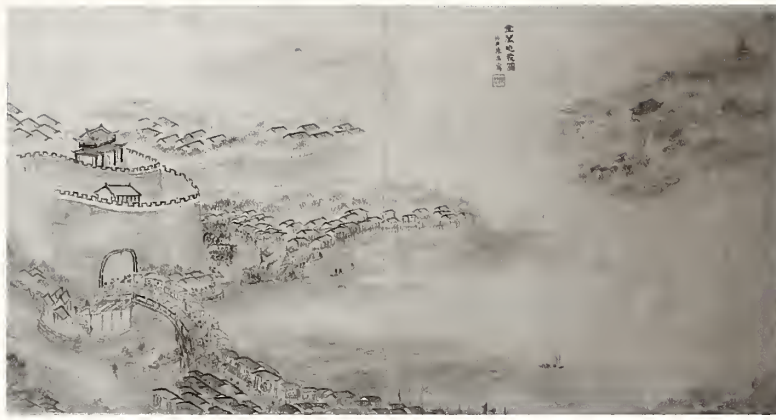
### **Paintings of Suzhou**

Although place paintings were produced in nearby Songjiang and the secondary capital of Nanjing—as well as other regions, such as Huizhou and the primary capital of Beijing—during the late Ming, the quantity of the works does not compare to those that emerged from Suzhou.<sup>14</sup> Late Ming Suzhou boasted the greatest number of successful degree holders, one of the highest standards of living, and some of the most productive farming districts in the empire, as well as a rich arts and crafts industry.<sup>15</sup> Paintings of Suzhou sites were a favorite among the moneyed and educated clientele of a city that connoisseurs, collectors, and artists had long considered a nexus of painting.

Throughout the Ming dynasty, paintings of specific Suzhou locales were produced by trained artists who openly supported themselves by painting, such as Zhang Hong; by affluent artists who purportedly painted to amuse themselves and their friends, such as Shen Zhou (1427–1509); and by artists like Wen Zhengming (1470–1559) and Lu Zhi (1496–1576), who painted for a living but did not publicly claim an identity as painters.<sup>16</sup> The place paintings that Suzhou artists produced also ranged widely in tone and purpose, from Wen Jia’s (1501–1583) pictorial reminiscence of a group visit to two famous local caves, to Qian Gong’s illustration of a monastery yet to be rebuilt as part of a direct appeal for funds for the project, to Tang Yin’s visual report of the devastation and famine that followed a series of floods in the Suzhou environs.<sup>17</sup>

Amidst this artistically diverse environment, paintings of Suzhou were produced as functioning components integral to common societal situations in which the average elite man was involved, such as his training for official life and duties thereafter, social entertainments, and religious activities. Carefully organized works depicting experiential views were ubiquitous. Hence, I do not treat the specific paintings discussed below as unique art works. Rather, they have been





1 DETAIL

Chen Si, *Departing at Daybreak at Jinchang*, leaf from *Paintings for Suzhou Prefect Kou Shen's Resignation from Office*. Dated 1626. Album, ink and color on paper; each leaf, 32.7 x 64.5 cm. Suzhou Museum.

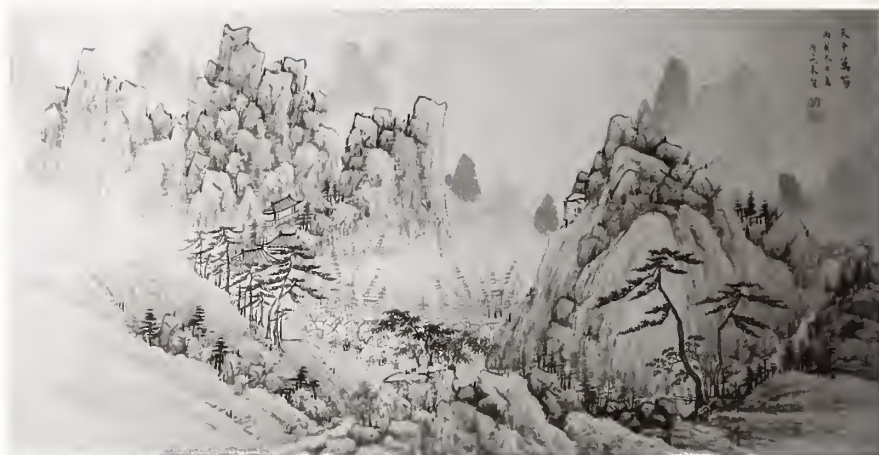
selected as examples of general categories of contemporaneous, commonplace paintings of Suzhou with which viewers would have been familiar.

The works I have chosen as representative of the two functional categories discussed below were produced by painters, many of whom are now relatively unknown, who successfully specialized in these painting types. The advantage of this is that they are far more likely to be original works of their day, since the paintings were produced in abundant quantity, were not difficult to obtain, and were not associated with more famous artistic personalities, such as Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and Lu Zhi—whose works have been extensively copied and imitated. I suggest here that the value of these paintings lies not only in their illustration of the plethora of contemporaneous visual experiences available to Suzhou art buyers, but also in their quality as genuine artifacts.

### “Honorific” Paintings of Suzhou

“Honorific” paintings of Suzhou were produced for eminent officials or other distinguished individuals such as abbots, often when they left one post for another, after having completed a particularly extensive journey in the line of duty or on retirement. They were ordered and presented as gifts, or were purchased by the recipients. “Honorific” paintings of Suzhou produced during the mid-Ming period fall under the broader category that Anne Clapp designates “commemorative” painting.<sup>18</sup> An early Ming-dynasty example of an “honorific” place painting is *Taibai Mountains* (*Taibaishan tu*), a handscroll by Wang Meng (ca. 1301–1385) that was prepared for the Buddhist abbot of the Tiantong Monastery in the Taibai Mountains near Ningbo in eastern Zhejiang Prefecture, most likely between 1378 and 1382.<sup>19</sup> A mid-Ming “honorific” painting in a different format is the three-album set of paintings in the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, entitled *Journey by Water* (*Shuicheng tu*). These paintings depict the scenery between Suzhou and Beijing and were done by Qian Gu (1508–1572) and Zhang Fu (1546–ca. 1631) in honor of the high official Wang Shizhen’s (1526–1590) trip to Beijing in 1574.<sup>20</sup>

Two large, multileaf albums illustrating the landscape of Suzhou and its environs provide examples of “honorific” paintings from the late Ming period. *Paintings for Suzhou Prefect Kou Shen's Resignation from Office* (*Suzhou Taishou Kou Shen quren tu*; ink and color on paper, 1626) was painted by a group of eight painters for the official Kou Shen (*jinshi* 1573–1620) on the occasion of his retirement.<sup>21</sup>



2

2  
Zhu Zhi, *Ten-Thousand Tablets of Mount Tianping*, leaf from *Paintings for Suzhou Prefect Kou Shen's Resignation from Office*. Dated 1626. Album, ink and color on paper; each leaf, 32.7 x 64.5 cm. Suzhou Museum.

Its ten painted leaves, each paired with a leaf of calligraphy, depict the cityscapes of Suzhou, including Chang Bridge and the Jinchang Gate (also called Chang Gate) area (fig. 1 and Map 1), as well as famous spots in the surrounding countryside, such as Mount Lingyan and Mount Tianping (fig. 2). Seven painters were enlisted in the early 1600s to create another album, *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu* (*Jiang-zuo mingsheng tu*; ink and color on silk), for the official, Li Jiquan, who was leaving the locale for another position.<sup>22</sup> Its sixteen painted leaves, each paired with a leaf of calligraphy, intersperse the most celebrated sites of Suzhou, including Stone Lake and Tiger Hill (fig. 3), with illustrations of other Jiangsu sites within Li's jurisdiction, such as the Lord Zhang Cave near Yixing (fig. 4) and Mount Jin, an island situated at the confluence of the Grand Canal and the Yangzi River.

The documentation attached to the “honorific” paintings elucidates the visual experience illustrated in their leaves. Each painting has a companion leaf of poetry, as in *Paintings for Suzhou Prefect Kou Shen*, or explanatory inscription, as in *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu*, while the entire album is framed between an extensive preface and colophons. These laud the accomplishments and character of the recipient through a flattering overview of his career and achievements. The documentation also clearly states the goals of the albums. A man who had formerly served under the recipient, Li Jiquan, wrote the colophon for *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu*. His detailed description of the social context for the production of the album merits its complete presentation here:

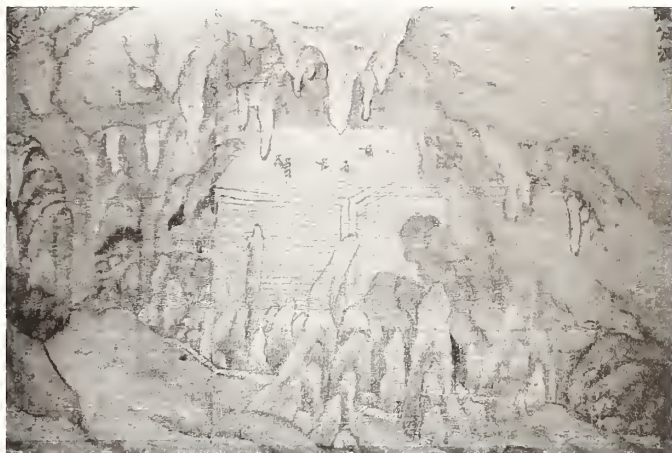
Formerly, when I was an assistant in the Provincial Surveillance Commission in Ying (Hubei), it was actually because of Mr. Li Jiquan, our surveillance commissioner, that I was able to avail myself favorably of a good reputation there, and as a result I was transferred to the border of Zhejiang. At that time, Mr. Li had been made a censor due to his talents and was sent out to arrange the military administration of the area. [Although] his administration did not fail to gather the full taxes due, the people were not preyed upon. His prestige became known everywhere, and his great reputation was known in court and countryside. And yet, [Mr. Li] alone did not agree with the ideas of the grand councilor of the time, and although he was not given any reward for his virtue, he obeyed and persevered in serving the government [when he was] sent out to serve in Huzhou. At the lakefront he





3

3  
Sun Zhi, *Tiger Hill*, detail of leaf  
from *Famous Sites of Southern  
Jiangsu*. Early 17th century. Album,  
ink and color on silk; each leaf, 25.5 x  
50 cm. Nanjing Museum.



4

4  
Lu Shiren, *Lord Zhang Cave*, detail  
of leaf from *Famous Sites of Southern  
Jiangsu*. Early 17th century. Album,  
ink and color on silk; each leaf, 25.5 x  
50 cm. Nanjing Museum.

first prepared the area to withstand floods, so that [the area] not destroyed by floods extended to the southern part of his jurisdiction. When I heard this news I was pleased.

Increasingly the heavens blessed [Mr. Li] and so his jurisdiction increased. It was ordered he be given a special flag-token for the road. [Mr. Li] ably led the civil and military officers in guarding and caring for our fellow citizens of Wu. In the four *jun* of Wu, he rebuilt the flood embankments. When people acquire such an official, it is as good as bringing in a harvest. They know that none will die of hunger [and be found] in ditches or on the roads. Mr. Li went to the four corners of his jurisdiction to inspect [the situation] and console [the people]. Moreover, he returned many times to offer them relief.

After concluding this [project], he assisted the leaders and petty officers of the area to muster their troops and equip their boats in case they had not adequately prepared. Mr. Li said, 'Destitute people do evil. You cannot govern them.' Trembling, the leaders and petty officers followed his orders. From then on there were warships on the lake. All the fords and waterways had police boats and troops. Every ten days there was an inspection, and every month a review. He only took his leisure after these preparations were complete. Now, villains could not operate and pirates did not dare spy into the Wu area.

Further, he warned the officials in the towns and the *jun* to work together to set up flood embankments to prepare for the water, saying, 'If the flooding still cannot be prevented, and the people have nothing to eat, extend the time for paying their taxes and purchase their labor. This will be a meritorious act.' The officials in the towns and the *jun* followed his orders promptly and diligently, and the people also happily rushed to execute them. Everywhere that there were flooded areas or marshy lands in the four *jun*, they built up the earth into embankments, and they always reported on their success in a timely manner. From that time on there were three floods in Wu, and in three successive years [the water] came up even with the embankments, and three times they had a harvest. From then on, the [amount] of



reclaimed fields increased every year, and the high embankments along the lakes and rivers were farmed. The people cheered and danced at the cross-roads and sang:

Plentiful our grain and water,  
the waves of the lake do not climb.  
Plentiful our food and troops,  
our lord's government is sublime.

Now Mr. Li's term of appointment has been fulfilled, and he has been transferred to serve as the administrative vice-commissioner for the two Zhe. The country people were all sorrowful at his leaving, and they lamented because it was by imperial [order]. Thus, they followed him, singing:

Since our Lord cannot remain,  
who will (hear) our moans of pain?  
We think of your virtue and moral vein,  
as a towering pillar in a rushing stream.

Therefore, we donors got together to have sixteen paintings made of the unexcelled mountains and streams of the area to present [to him] as a testimonial, and because the people were unable to forget him, the literati have also come together to write poems for them, in order to translate the thoughts of the people. Because I have known Mr. Li the longest and have been helped the most personally by him, which I can never forget, I have written a preface for the paintings and their verses. Thus I have come to write this.

On an auspicious day in the last month of winter of the *guiwei* year of the Wanli era [1583], respectfully written with bowed head by your student Jiang Menglong, a *jìnshì* degree holder in the first rank, grand master for court precedence and former right assistant provincial administration commissioner for Zhejiang.<sup>23</sup>

[Chinese Text A, see page 174]

The colophons, inscriptions, and poetry conflate the topography shown in the paintings with the person for whom they were produced. A good example is the companion poem to the painting of Stone Lake in *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu*.

Here, the beauty and history of Stone Lake are topographically and metaphorically organized around the life and achievements of the recipient. First, the writer describes the time and setting of a visit he appears to have taken to Stone Lake with the recipient. They sailed to a shrine dedicated to the renowned official, scholar, and author Fan Chengda (1126–1193). The author then reflects upon the lost historic period of the worthy Fan and transitions smoothly into a description of the equally outstanding talent of his modern-day counterpart, the recipient Li Jiquan. The author then emphasizes the sadness of all at Mr. Li's parting with a second historic comparison of the recipient to the beloved Later Han-dynasty (25–220 CE) official Kou Xun. Finally, the author returns to the Stone Lake journey with which he began—reminding Mr. Li that just as no official will ever take his place in the hearts of the people, neither will any scenery he experiences compare to that of the area he leaves behind. The inscription is given in its entirety here:

At Stone Lake in the eighth month the autumn waters were calm;  
 in front of the shrine of the grand councilor,<sup>24</sup> the moonlight was bright.  
 The distant mountains were a horizontal belt of deep blue green;  
 in an instant, they were magically transformed by rising mists.  
 The palaces of Wu and the walls of Yue can no longer be seen,  
 and the silent solitude and green mosses have bound up this deserted hall.  
 We mourned the ancients in this empty, deserted [place] where the deer roam;  
 on this lofty mountain, we followers cherished thoughts of [this] worthy.  
 Our lord's talent was outstanding, the marvel of Jiangxi;  
 [you served with] faithful admonitions and moral counsel at the imperial court.  
 Since [your reputation] for standing against the enemy was already established  
 in your achievements in many cities,  
 [hence] your new command at the frontier by imperial edict.  
 'Four steeds'<sup>25</sup> are ready to leave, but they hesitate;  
 we have no cause to 'borrow Mr. Kou,'<sup>26</sup> [yet] we cannot but desire to.  
 When you remember traveling on the upper storey of a boat on this lake,  
 Mount Xian<sup>27</sup> of former times will scarcely compare.

Respectfully written by Gu Jiusi.

[Text B]

As in most "honorific" paintings, the laudatory and personal nature of this inscription was given visual form in the accompanying painting. The unusually expansive perspectives of topography provided in the "honorific" albums represent the power and authority their recipients wielded over large geographical areas (figs. 1, 2, 3, and 5). High horizon lines and detailed topography provide the viewer



5

5  
Shen Wan, *Mount Tianping*, detail  
of leaf from *Famous Sites of Southern  
Jiangsu*. Early 17th century. Album,  
ink and color on silk; each leaf, 25.5 x  
50 cm. Nanjing Museum.

with a bird's-eye perspective of a sizable sweep of landscape. They offer, in effect, an inverse viewing experience to the monumental hanging scroll landscapes of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). In Fan Kuan's (fl. ca. 990–1030) *Travelers Among Streams and Mountains*, for example, the towering mountains and low horizon lines of the painting, when combined with the act of viewing the hanging scroll on the wall, place the viewer close to the position of the tiny traveler looking up at the monolithic forms towering above him.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the extensive landscapes of the “honorific” albums were meant to be viewed when laid out on a table, and their high horizon lines and minute details invite one to imagine commanding a view of the real topography itself from this same elevated position of authority. In presenting a high view over a vast panorama, painters of “honorific” works could also suggest the enlightened internal view of their recipients while illustrating the extensive districts and political units they governed.

To further their aggrandizing function, the “honorific” albums also boast a greater number of leaves. *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu*, for example, contains thirty-two leaves of painting and calligraphy, in comparison to the average ten-to-twenty-leaf productions of the “famous sites” paintings discussed below. The dimensions of their individual leaves are also larger. The leaves of *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu* and *Paintings for Suzhou Prefect Kou Shen's Resignation from Office* are almost twice the size of most of the paintings in the other category.

The topography portrayed in the “honorific” albums reflects the personal visual experiences of their recipients. Accordingly, both albums feature non-canonical sites of import to the recipient and distinctive views of famous sites that presumably had particular resonance for the honoree. Subjects such as the Jinchang Gate area (fig. 1) were not conventionally included in late Ming paintings of the famous sites of Suzhou.<sup>29</sup> Both albums also present sections of Mount Tianping (figs. 2 and 5) that are quite removed from the popular entrance, with equally secluded paths-less-traveled for the viewer's ascent. Perhaps the atypical views found in these albums present privileged entrances to these highly trafficked sites or the itinerary of a specific outing. Although I will not speculate here as to the precise circumstances of each individualized view, the unique group of sites and views identifies their honorific intent.<sup>30</sup>



Honorees were also provided polite generic representative figures of themselves as a touchstone for viewing. Almost every leaf of both albums includes a scholarly figure involved in an appropriately high-minded activity. Men in scholars' robes gaze and point at the landscape (fig. 4); travel via palanquin, donkey, or boat to a scenic spot (fig. 2); and converse with friends (fig. 3). Several leaves appear more personal still by presenting figures enacting specific incidents in the lives of the recipients. Distinctive examples include the carefully delineated group of spelunkers at Lord Zhang's Cave (fig. 4) and the impressive, ceremonial parting scene in the bustling area near Jinchang Gate (figure 1 detail).

The overall theme connecting the panoramic views and the personalized topography, figures, and events of the "honorific" paintings is that of good governance. Natural elements such as idyllic mountains, forests, and waterways fill the majority of the picture space in both albums, while the architecture is minimized in size and is largely concealed amidst groves of trees (figs. 3 and 5).<sup>31</sup> Large, gnarled pines and cypresses and unaffected local rustics in the form of secluded fishermen and solitary wood-gatherers dot these landscapes, symbolizing the goodness and integrity of the recipients. In this sense, these pictures may be seen as local versions of imperial paintings of the realm in that they legitimize the authority of a ruler by illustrating the good effects of his reign—a peaceful, productive landscape. Well-kept, historically celebrated topography and architecture; prosperous, unflooded fields; happy fisherman and woodcutters; and even bustling commerce are set against a backdrop of the blue-and-green-hued landscape traditionally associated with paradisiacal lands and the distant past. Indeed, the remarkable similarity of the bridge-market and boat scene in *Departing at Daybreak at Jinchang* (fig. 1) from *Paintings for Suzhou Prefect Kou Shen* to a section in the much-copied *Qingming shanghe tu*—which is believed to be an idealized depiction of the realm in peace and prosperity that was created to legitimize the reign of a Song-dynasty (960–1279) emperor—reinforces this interpretation.<sup>32</sup> The most striking difference is the focus on an identifiable historical person, Kou Shen, who is dressed in a blue robe and red sash and is aboard a boat ready for departure. He bows to the group of scholars on shore to the right of the Jinchang Gate, which was located in the northwest section of the city (Map 1). It was the gate most convenient to the Grand Canal. The poem, "First Light at Jinchang," which Wen Zhenmeng (1574–1636) wrote to accompany the album leaf, reinforces the theme of Kou Shen's good governance:<sup>33</sup>

Since his reputation reached the intelligence of the emperor,  
he was the same as the many men who were praised in antiquity as worthy  
steeds.

He had the curtains [of his carriage] lifted [to see] in all directions,<sup>34</sup> and rain followed his carriage,<sup>35</sup>  
 and he held his tablet of office for a long time until there was a contrary wind. Heartbroken, he was conciliatory and upright, and slow to memorialize the throne,  
 and so his strength was spent in writing musical dramas, for he was in no position to make great achievements.  
 Desiring to prove to this sincere gentleman that this is a grateful place, we have exhausted ourselves in clinging to the shafts of his carriage in our grief. A small poem presented upon parting with Master Liting [Kou Shen] who, because of the death of his mother, is returning to Qin [Shaanxi].<sup>36</sup>  
 [Text C]

Similar to the bustling port of the painting, the laudatory language of the poem reinforces the successful tenure of Kou Shen by comparing him to the Later Han dynasty officials Jia Cong, who had his carriage curtains lifted in order to see and hear everything that occurred in his area of jurisdiction, and Zheng Hong, whose benevolent and virtuous presence ensured abundant rain. The rhetorical statement made by these paintings is that the recipients left their spheres of influence in better shape than when they arrived. They governed successfully.

Finally, the “honorific” albums present a unique physical and intellectual visual experience that allowed recipients to enjoy a conspicuously costly artistic production as they examined topographical views representative of themselves. These albums are the largest of the Suzhou paintings discussed here, both in size and number of leaves. To view and fully appreciate album leaves this large, it is necessary to place them on a table. An album-viewing session would have taken some time, particularly in the case of the thirty-two leaves of *Famous Sites of Southern Jiangsu*. As each leaf was laid out for examination, the material cost for paper and pigments, as well as the implicit fees of the many professional artists employed, would have been impressively obvious. The expanded format, large group of painters, and organization of the illustrious colophonists who participated in the albums’ production signified the social cachet of both the organizer and recipient, but it was the intent of the literary allusions and painted views that would have been the focus of conversation. The written and painted views they present attested to the recipients’ knowledge of his district; his ability to appreciate the variety of landscape painting styles represented; and his popularity among the many respected colophonists who wrote so admiringly of him. These topographical, stylistic, and personal views provided an emotional visual experience filled with endless potential for discussion.

### “Famous Sites” Paintings of Suzhou

The famous sites of Suzhou were legendary. For more than a thousand years, since the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) at least, pilgrims and sightseers had ascended its celebrated mountains to summit-top monasteries; literary and social clubs had met in its countryside temple halls and secluded lakeside estates; and holiday vacationers had boated along its many canals and out onto nearby Lake Tai. As a result, by the late Ming, any chance for an unmediated experience of the natural beauty or topographical novelties that generated the initial fame of these “famous sites” had long been buried beneath the extensive religious, literary, and political history they had accumulated over the centuries. Though some writers commented on their delight at finding the scenery as beautiful as they had been told, no vacationer or pilgrim expected to participate in an unstructured or uninformed experience of a famed site in Suzhou.<sup>37</sup> Those visitors who considered themselves worthy contributors to the ever-developing cultural identity of these sites—what Maurice Halbwachs has labeled the “collective memory” and later scholars have called the “cultural memory”—publicized their visits in poems and prose, or wrote directly upon the scenery.<sup>38</sup> Lower status visitors were expected to experience these celebrated spots as reverential observers of previously identified natural beauty and the multilayered cultural history they signified.<sup>39</sup>

Although the reputation of these famous sites had been established in part through their frequent mention in gazetteers, literature, and poetry, the development of a consistent group of Suzhou sites in the late Ming does not directly correspond to any single text and appears to have developed within a discrete pictorial tradition. For example, in the *Supplemental Collection of Literary Pieces from the Capital of Wu (Suzhou)* (*Wudu wencui xuji*), a compilation of writings edited by the mid-Ming painter Qian Gu, many of the sites in the late Ming group are abundantly represented, but no more so than other sites that were rarely illustrated during late Ming times.<sup>40</sup> Also, unlike the set of the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, which has been extensively analyzed by Alfreda Murck, the famous sites of Suzhou did not develop from a particular poem cycle. Nor did these sites suggest any political stance, as did some versions of the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, or other later paintings referencing this tradition, such as the *Eight Views of Beijing*.<sup>41</sup>

It appears that the individual sites favored by certain prominent mid-Ming artists influenced those late Ming painters who developed this conventional menu, apart from any specific literary tradition. Exactly how such earlier works affected late Ming artists’ versions of the same sites, however, is complicated by the situation that many representations of these sites attributed to the mid-Ming masters are copies or fabrications. For example, three similar handscrolls that depict a majority of the Suzhou sites codified by late Ming painters bear an attribution





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Yuan Shangtong, *Tiger Hill*,  
leaf from *Twelve Views of Suzhou*.  
Undated. Album, ink and color  
on paper; each leaf, 24.7 x 29.3 cm.  
Shanghai Museum.

to Shen Zhou. With reference to the one in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Marc Wilson does not consider it to be “an assured work by the hand of the master,” owing to differences that include the “insistence on reducing architectural and landscape motifs to clear-cut pattern, and the taut quality of the architectural drawing.”<sup>42</sup> The suspect attributes of paintings such as these suggest they may have been painted later in an attempt to enhance the prestige and market price of late Ming “famous sites” paintings by creating an illustrious lineage for them and capitalizing on the names of famous mid-Ming painters. The fine quality of other Suzhou place paintings associated with these masters, however, suggests some reliable copies of original paintings may remain.<sup>43</sup> Literary records make clear that the acknowledged leaders of mid-Ming Suzhou painting, such as Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, and Lu Zhi, all visited and painted a number of these famous sites. For example, Wen Zhengming recorded visits to the Pond of Heaven, Tiger Hill, Mount Tianping, Mount Zhixing, and Stone Lake.<sup>44</sup> Lu Zhi also visited Tiger Hill and Stone Lake, and kept a retreat at the base of Mount Zhixing.<sup>45</sup> Records show that their paintings of these sites varied from unique versions of solitary visits to individual sites to coordinated projects, such as a multileaf birthday album produced by Wen Zhengming, Lu Zhi, and other Suzhou luminaries, which depicted various scenes of Suzhou coupled with poems.<sup>46</sup> The subject matter chosen by these influential painters no doubt affected the development of the conventional list of famous sites popular in the late Ming; however, the problematic nature of the extant “famous sites” paintings attributed to mid-Ming dynasty painters makes a consideration of their impact on late Ming works beyond the scope of this study.

Most late Ming viewers could have guessed the majority of subjects in a painted album of famous Suzhou sites. A typical album would include Xukou, Panchi, Dengwei, Tiger Hill, Hushan, Stone Lake, Mount Tianping, Mount Zhixing, Mount Lingyan, and the Pond of Heaven (Map 1). Two of the most prominent site painters of the day, Yuan Shangtong and Zhang Hong, produced a large number



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7  
Zhang Hong, *Night Moon Over Tiger Hill*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutan*. Dated 1638. Album, ink and color on silk; each leaf, 30.5 x 24 cm. Beijing Palace Museum.



8

8  
Zhang Hong, *Spring Dawn at Panchi*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutan*. Dated 1638. Album, ink and color on silk; each leaf, 30.5 x 24 cm. Beijing Palace Museum.

of such albums. *Twelve Views of Sutan* (*Sutan shier jing*) by Yuan Shangtong and *Twelve Views of Sutan* (*Sutan shier jing*) by Zhang Hong illustrate the basic components of the many extant works of this type.<sup>47</sup>

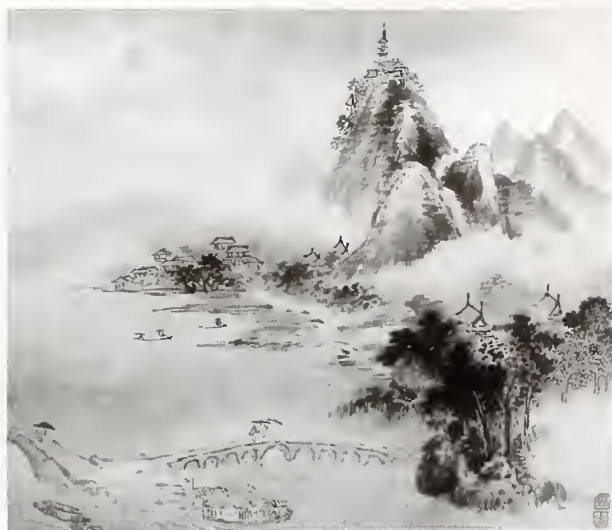
The goal of these works was not the differentiation of an individual through a personalized view of a place, but his inclusion within the “cultural memory” of a site via the shared experience of a historically sanctioned view. The focused perspective, seasonal references, populated compositions, codified topography, and conceptual presentations artists employed in rendering these famous places provided viewers with an accessible, experiential encounter with the illustrated sites. Select sections of topography are the primary focus of each rendering. In their views of Tiger Hill, for example, Yuan and Zhang do not encompass the entire mountainscape from above, as in the “honorific” albums (fig. 3). Instead, they present a frontal view of only the primary topographical elements found on the mountain summit, which they position to fill the majority of the picture space in the center of the composition (figs. 6 and 7). Rather than provide a lofty view of vast landscape, they place the viewer in a more active and interactive position, whether climbing up toward the summit of Tiger Hill, or looking down from an adjacent hill—as the figure at Panchi is doing (fig. 8).

The emphatic seasonal references and variety of people that fill the compositions of the “famous sites” paintings provided viewers with dates and persons with which they might associate their memories or imagined experiences. Many paintings also evoke a certain time of day. “Night Moon over Tiger Hill” was a popular theme (fig. 7), as was the moon over the moon bridge at *Hushan* (fig. 9). The riotous extremes of the four seasons are also well represented. The changing colors of autumn are evident in Yuan Shangtong’s scene of *Hushan* (fig. 9), and the heavy rains of this same season are depicted in his rendering of the theme “Mist

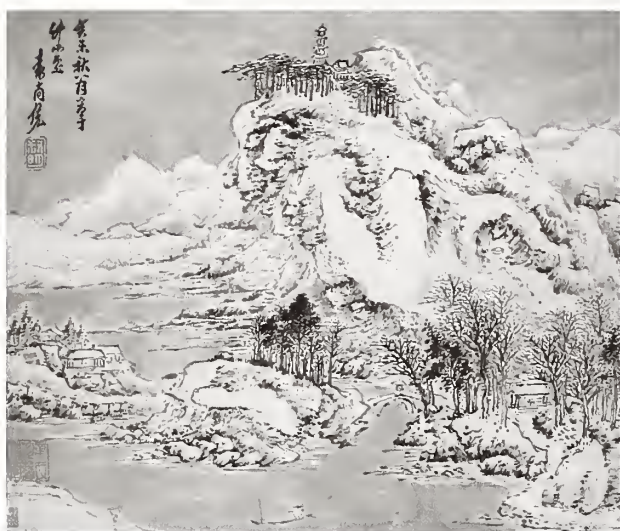




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Yuan Shangtong, *Hushan*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*. Undated. Album, ink and color on paper; each leaf, 24.7 x 29.3 cm. Shanghai Museum.

10

Yuan Shangtong, *Stone Lake*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*. Undated. Album, ink and color on paper; each leaf, 24.7 x 29.3 cm. Shanghai Museum.

and Rain over Stone Lake" (fig. 10). Both painters capture the cold snows of deep winter at Dengwei and Mount Lingyan (fig. 11).<sup>48</sup> Zhang Hong suggests the height of spring in the blossoming plum trees of *Spring Dawn at Panchi* (fig. 8), while he evokes the hot summer months through the lush, blooming foliage of the *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven* (fig. 12). Some themes appear to have been more popular than others. "Night Moon over Tiger Hill," "Mist and Rain over Stone Lake," and "Accumulated Snow on Mount Lingyan" occur most frequently. The popularity of these particular themes may be tied to the festival days on which people frequented these sites. For example, Tiger Hill was a particularly popular site at which to enjoy the Mid-Autumn Festival moon-viewing activities.<sup>49</sup>

The universal nature of these seasonal themes allowed viewers to remember their visits to the sites—which probably occurred over one of several of the lunar





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Yuan Shangtong, *Mount Lingyan*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*. Undated. Album, ink and color on paper; each leaf, 24.7 x 29.3 cm. Shanghai Museum.

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Zhang Hong, *Stone Cliff at the Pond of Heaven*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*. Dated 1638. Album, ink and color on silk; each leaf, 30.5 x 24 cm. Beijing Palace Museum.

13

Zhang Hong, *Evening Ferry on the Xu River*, detail, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*. Dated 1638. Album, ink and color on silk; each leaf, 30.5 x 24 cm. Beijing Palace Museum.

14

Zhang Hong, *Evening Verdure at Mount Zhixing*, leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*. Dated 1638. Album, ink and color on silk; each leaf, 30.5 x 24 cm. Beijing Palace Museum.

holidays—without actually depicting the details of any one person's visit.<sup>50</sup> As opposed to the specific days, places, activities, and people set against the timeless colors of the blue-and-green style of the “honorific” paintings, the “famous sites” paintings present the recognizable colors and collective activities of the seasons to which any personal experience could be tied. People involved in seasonally appropriate endeavors encourage the viewer in this activity. Tiny figures huddle beneath umbrellas as they scurry toward their destinations (figs. 10 and 11). People sit or loll quietly in the summer heat (fig. 12). Travelers admire the moon (figs. 7 and 9).

More than the “honorific” albums, the paintings of famous sites provide a larger cast of characters involved in a variety of activities with which viewers may relate. A solitary, focal set of figures does occur in several of the Zhang Hong and Yuan Shangtong paintings, but many also display an assortment of working people and their pursuits. Professional boatmen, and what appear to be families, ferry over the Xu River (fig. 13) and shopkeepers ply their goods at the foot of Mount Zhixing, while figures who could be beggars loiter at the entrance to the monastery (fig. 14). Compared to the “Tiger Hill” scenes of the “honorific” albums with only a single set of travelers, the “Tiger Hill” compositions that Zhang and Yuan present are abuzz. In Yuan's rendering, people cross the bridge, climb the stairs, take in the view, admire the waterfall, and rest on Thousand Man Rock (fig. 6). Zhang, too, depicts a set of nature admirers, as well as a congregation of monks and laymen, in conversation halfway up the monastery stairs (fig. 7). Many people are doing many things in paintings of famous Suzhou sites, and this lack of focus upon a single representative figure or group suggests that the place represented, not the buyer or recipient, was the focus of the project.

Each of the Suzhou “famous sites” paintings is easily identified via its codified topography, which consists of two or three simply rendered topographical or architectural elements. This pictorial shorthand does not parallel literary descriptions of the sites, nor does it seek to portray accurately the number of people at



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15  
Tiger Hill, photograph, the author,  
1999.



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16  
Pond of Heaven, photograph,  
the author, 1999.

many of the sites. For example, all the historical writings, religious and political events, social occasions, and poetic moments associated with Tiger Hill over the centuries had turned it into a tourist complex so crowded by the late Ming that many scholars eschewed it for less-frequented sites. Despite the multitude of buildings and places of interest that visitors passed on the gradual climb to the summit, only the earliest, most famed sites near the top of the ridge were delineated in paintings of famous Suzhou sites (fig. 15).<sup>51</sup> Based upon my own experience of the sites as they are preserved today, I believe that the codified topography of these paintings represents the most striking visual memories one retains from a visit to the site. Although I was prepared to see the features of the places that are consistently depicted in the “famous sites” pictures, I was continually surprised by how much more extensive and crowded the actual sites are in comparison.

It is largely possible to re-create a late Ming dynasty visual experience of these sites today because they still occupy, albeit inexactly, the same grounds. Scenic sites such as the Pond of Heaven and Mount Tianping have been maintained and developed for tourism, while working sites such as the Xu River are still utilized as they have been for centuries.<sup>52</sup> My onsite examinations of these famous sites suggest that the standardized topographical and architectural elements artists employed in rendering them were those with the most powerful and memorable visual impact, and that they were depicted in such a way as to re-create the visitor’s experience of them. I will explain the basic characteristics of each here, based on my visits, to correct past mistaken identifications and to enable recognition of these places in late Ming “famous sites” paintings.

The mystical location of the Pond of Heaven has captured the imaginations of countless visitors (fig. 16). Its appearance, halfway up a mountainside, is startling. One wanders along a path deeper and deeper through groves of trees before emerging into the clearing containing the pool. The small, clear, and oval-shaped mountain spring-fed pond is bordered by fantastically shaped rocks, many of which have been inscribed with fanciful titles such as “fairy stone,” “stone sutra,” and “immortal’s foot stone.” Several large, flat stones at the water’s edge provide the visitor with an area to sit and take in the view. A steep mountain peak scat-





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Yuan Shangtong, *Mount Tianping*,  
leaf from *Twelve Views of Sutai*.  
Undated. Album, ink and color  
on paper; each leaf, 24.7 x 29.3 cm.  
Shanghai Museum.

tered with equally extraordinary boulders looms over the pool, further enhancing the isolated, magical feel of the site.<sup>53</sup> In rendering the Pond of Heaven, painters frame the pool and its clearing between the rocky peak and forest glen from which one emerges (fig. 12). The wall and rooftops of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) Jijian Monastery to the side of the pool are usually delineated as well.<sup>54</sup>

Countless partings and homecomings were enacted at Xukou, the intersection of the city's outer canal and the Xu River, which led to the Grand Canal and destinations far away.<sup>55</sup> Its scenery undoubtedly remained etched upon the minds of many. It was also a fine starting point from which to boat to a number of the other famous sites.<sup>56</sup> The "T" formation where the Xu River meets the Waicheng Canal signifies this site in paintings (fig. 13).<sup>57</sup> The small rainbow bridge that boats pass under as they turn into the Waicheng Canal is always included, and boats are inevitably pictured at some stage of the crossing.

Mount Tianping, which stands fifteen kilometers west of Suzhou city and two hundred twenty-one meters above sea level, has a uniquely level summit, hence its name Tianping, or "Flat-Top." Even more striking are the extraordinary rocks that occur along its slopes. The peculiar shape of these tall, thin rocks struck traditional viewers as remarkably similar to the tablets (*hu*) held up by government officials when they received an audience with the emperor.<sup>58</sup> Prior to encountering a pool and surrounding buildings at the base of the mountain, visitors to Mount Tianping pass through a large park containing the remains of the maple forest planted at the foot of the mountain by Fan Yunlin (1558–1641), the late Ming descendant of the famous prime minister of the Northern Song dynasty, Fan Zhongyan (989–1052), whose shrine is here.<sup>59</sup> As one gazes up at the mountain from the far side of the pool, the uniquely shaped rocks are shown to best advantage and are further highlighted in autumn by the deep red of the maples below. Late Ming painters incorporated the most striking elements of this scene: the maple trees and mountain adorned with its distinctive rocks (fig. 17).<sup>60</sup> Some, like Zhang Hong, also added the pool.





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Hushan, photograph, the author,  
1999.

Although the visual code for these sites—a mountain pool with strange rocks beside a clearing representing the Pond of Heaven; a “T”-shaped canal and rainbow-bridge designating Xukou; and a pool surrounded by trees at the foot of a mountain covered with tall, thin rocks indicating Mount Tianping—could be learned through careful comparison of several late Ming “famous sites” albums, only a tour through these sites reveals how painters organized the codified topography and architectural elements in a way that reinforced the experiential intent of these works. Not only do a large monastic complex, pagoda, waterfall, and two flat stones signify Tiger Hill (figs. 6 and 7), and an islet monastery with pagoda and arch bridge bordering a canal indicate Hushan (fig. 9), but significantly, these elements were also composed to synopsise the way one would remember encountering them during a visit.

The Tiger Hill paintings of both Yuan Shangtong and Zhang Hong (figs. 6 and 7) present a circular composition that moves counterclockwise around a tiny pavilion at center, from the rooftops of the large summit monastery—which encompass the middle and upper right corner of the composition and crown its center—to the pagoda and bridge in the upper left, down the waterfall to Sword Pond at middle left, to the two large, flat surfaces of Thousand Man Rock emerging at the lower left.<sup>61</sup> In the late Ming, as today, this view of the most famous buildings and topography of Tiger Hill framed the many entertainments and activities staged there. Seating for such events was available on the steep steps up to the monastery, on the bridge, and on Thousand Man Rock. The discerning viewer, however, might climb the embankment facing the monastery to take in the entire scene.<sup>62</sup> The codified topography of Tiger Hill is presented as though seen from this vantage point.

Hushan (Tiger Mountain) has been confused with Tiger Hill (Huqiu) because of their similar names.<sup>63</sup> Late Ming visitors familiar with both sites, however, would have immediately recognized paintings of the Guangfu Pagoda, which rises directly above a canal that flows west into Lake Tai, and the Hushan Bridge that connects the pagoda with the region called Hushan on the opposite shore (figs. 9 and 18).<sup>64</sup> The extensive canal system of late Ming Suzhou delivered visitors very near most of its famous sites.<sup>65</sup> A certain amount of land travel was necessary, however, to reach the viewing summits of the mountains and the secluded beauty



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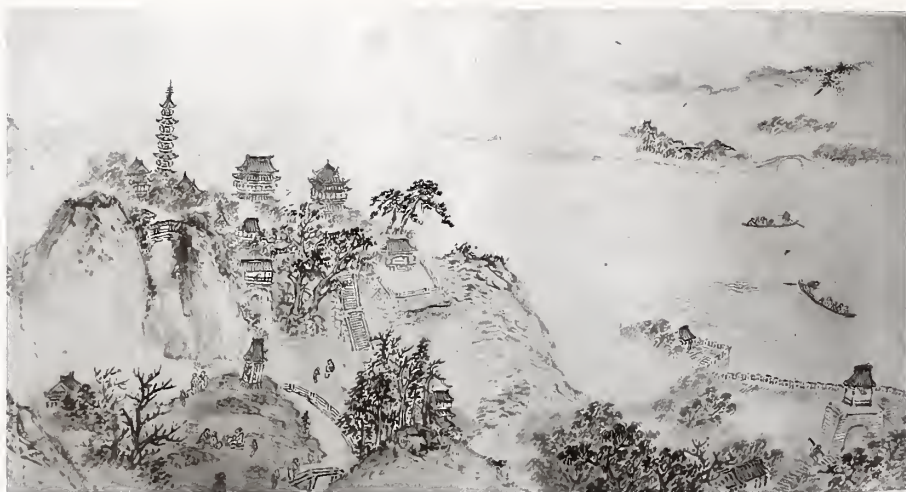
Stone Lake nine-arch bridge  
and distant Mount Shangfang,  
photograph, the author, 1999.

spots of the lowlands. Visiting Hushan did not require this often distasteful foray amidst the more “common” tourists, business establishments, and beggars that frequented these sites. Those arriving at Hushan by boat alighted directly below the monastic complex and entered straight away. The beautiful view obtained by this idyllic entry on water is depicted in most paintings of the site. The Guangfu Pagoda rises above lush fields on the left, silhouetted against distant mountains. Hushan Bridge appears to the right, and the stretch of waterway and distant mountains beyond become visible as the boat prepares to moor.<sup>66</sup>

Not far from Hushan lie the two famous plum-blossom viewing sites of Panchi and Dengwei. Panchi is a small islet to which late Ming travelers could boat to view its flowering trees in early spring; the islet and the flowering trees can also be admired from afar. Both of these activities are illustrated in Zhang Hong’s painting of the site (fig. 8).<sup>67</sup> Paintings of Dengwei focus on Sheng’en Monastery at the southern end of this mountain, from which one could view blossoming plum trees in the surrounding mountains and fields or the lovely vista of nearby Lake Tai.<sup>68</sup> On foot a traveler must climb over a hillock and descend to lake level in order to reach Panchi. The monastery at Dengwei sits at the end of the mountain range near the lake. Wealthy visitors no doubt sailed to the site, and this mode of arrival to both sites affords a sudden, striking vision of a small, floating islet or mountain-framed monastery ablaze in pinks and reds. Paintings of both sites invariably capture this first, dazzling visual experience.

For the largest Suzhou sites, such as Mount Zhixing, Mount Lingyan, and the Stone Lake area, painters organized the conceptual presentation of codified topography into synopses of a visitor’s tour. The distinctive elements in the lower to middle foreground signify the beginning of the trip. The midpoint of the experience is captured in the upper-middle ground by the most striking natural object or architecture one encounters moving through the site. The culminating moment of the tour is symbolized in the upper picture frame by a monastic establishment atop a mountain or in the middle of the composition by a revelatory view of the exceptional natural beauty or historic institution found at the extreme interior of the site.

Though it was being quarried when I visited in 1999, during the late Ming dynasty, Mount Zhixing offered Suzhou urbanites and other visitors a nearby for-



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Zhang Hong, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*. Dated 1648. Handscroll, ink and color on paper; 25.9 x 206.8 cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou. Detail of Xukou and Tiger Hill.

ested retreat. Sightseers and pilgrims climbed a steep set of stone stairs to visit its ancient monastery, said to have been established by the Jin-dynasty Buddhist monk Zhidun (314–366).<sup>69</sup> Many visitors then traveled westward over a mountain path to Mount Tianping just beyond. The precarious flight of stairs and famous monastic complex are usually presented in silhouette, re-creating the view of a visitor arriving from Suzhou (fig. 14). The viewer is positioned to approach the site as a visitor would, by beginning amidst stalls offering mules, palanquins, refreshments, and incense in the lower left. The viewer's gaze then imitates the visitor's progress up the stone stairs, to worship and wander about the monastery, the focal point of which is depicted midway up the frame at right. The mountain road in the center of the composition moves the viewer's eye out of the frame and suggests the possibility of the visitor traveling on to Mount Tianping beyond.<sup>70</sup>

From the summit of Mount Tianping, one can see the pagoda atop the crest of Mount Lingyan nearby. This became the predominant codified view of Mount Lingyan. To provide a visual abstract of a tour, artists also included the canal that passes by the foot of Mount Lingyan, as seen from the opposite bank, and the natural cave at the midpoint of the mountain, which is disproportionately large and seen from the front as though one were about to step inside. Visitors arrived by boat on the canal or by land on the nearby footpath to begin the ascent of the mountain. The mysterious Xi Shi Cave, which sits amid a forest of bamboo, provides a place for rest and meditation midway up the climb.<sup>71</sup> The ascent ends where leisure viewing and worship begin, at the renowned Lingyan Monastery at the summit.<sup>72</sup> Painters could not illustrate all of the numerous manmade and topographical sites that are seen during a climb up Mount Lingyan in one small album leaf. They could, however, capture the overall experience of the ascent by delineating the three most visually striking moments of the journey—the arrival on water or land, the cave, and the summit monastery (fig. 11).

At 294.5 meters high, Mount Shangfang is the tallest mountain pictured in the Suzhou “famous sites” paintings (fig. 19).<sup>73</sup> Situated on the western banks of Stone Lake, the mountain had panoramic vistas, monastic establishments, markets, and lake breezes that drew large crowds during the late Ming, as they still do today.<sup>74</sup> The codified elements in paintings of the site delineate the visual experience of someone arriving by boat from Suzhou to the north (fig. 10). Figures in the left





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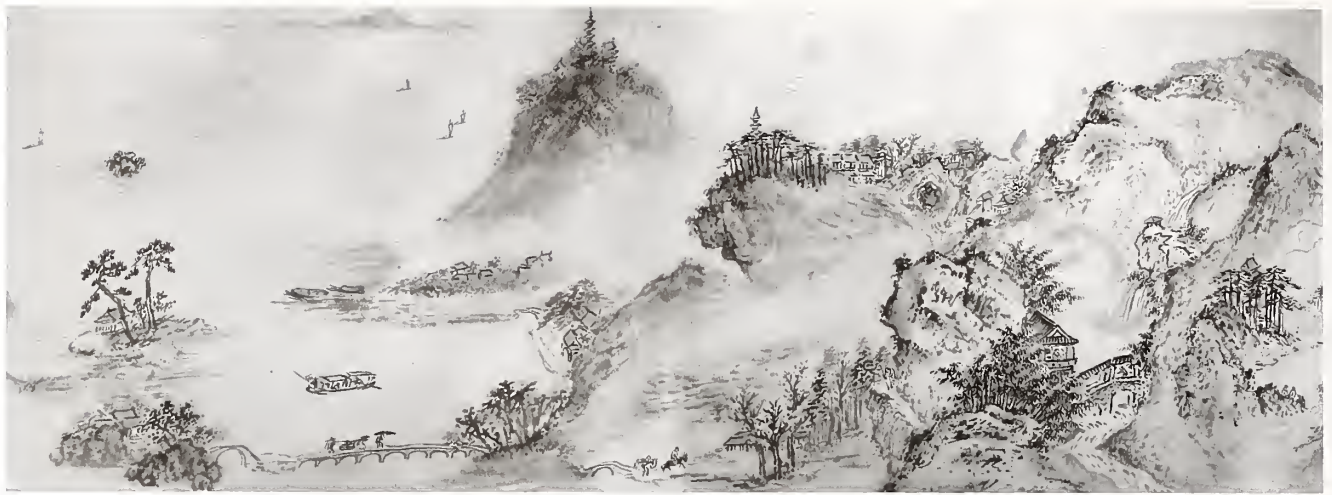
Zhang Hong, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*. Dated 1648. Handscroll, ink and color on paper; 25.9 x 206.8 cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou. Detail of Mount Zhixing.

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Zhang Hong, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*. Dated 1648. Handscroll, ink and color on paper; 25.9 x 206.8 cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou. Detail of Mount Tianping and the Pond of Heaven.

foreground emerge from boats or hurry along one of two famous bridges on the lake. They first reach the single-arch bridge that connects to a spit of land where many boats are harbored. The vast expanse of Stone Lake flows into the background behind this bridge. To the right, the famous nine-arch bridge extends to the far shore. The viewer can then travel through the shops and religious buildings represented by the rooftops that dot the landmass at right; move to the foot of Mount Shangfang; and climb to the Lengqie Monastery pagoda that caps its summit.<sup>75</sup> Painters often rendered the monastery, pagoda, boats, bridges, and people slightly smaller than their counterparts at other sites to emphasize the immensity of the Stone Lake district and the height of the mountain. They also captured the most evocative among the multitude of activities and amusements to be had at Stone Lake: the picturesque bridges one encountered upon arrival; the various establishments one could visit along the beautiful, meandering shoreline; and, following a strenuous climb, the summit monastery and pagoda.<sup>76</sup>

Some painters expanded the conceptual presentation of routes from a single site to an extended journey through a number of Suzhou famous sites. Zhang Hong's handscroll of 1648, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water* (*Qianshan yuanshui tu*), offers an excellent example.<sup>77</sup> The scroll begins as though the viewer was arriv-



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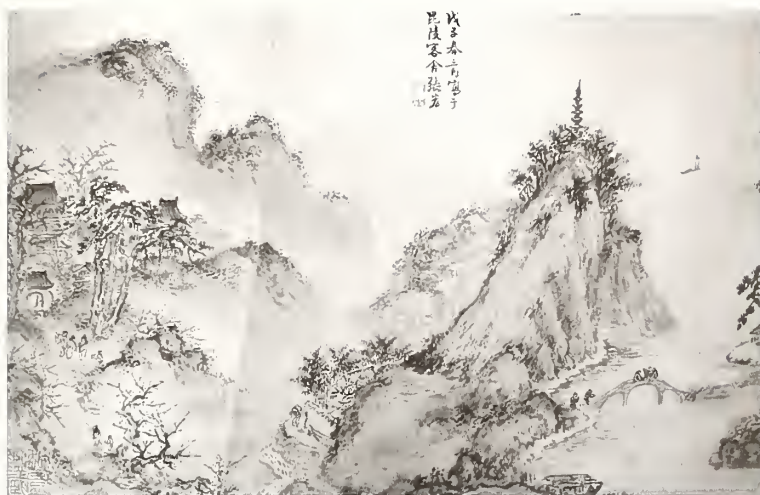
Zhang Hong, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*. Dated 1648. Handscroll, ink and color on paper; 25.9 x 206.8 cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou. Detail of Mount Lingyan and Stone Lake.

ing in Suzhou off the Grand Canal at the “T” intersection of the Xu River and the Waicheng Canal at Xukou (fig. 20). One then travels on to the summit monastery, waterfall, and Thousand Man Rock of Tiger Hill (fig. 20), over to the steep stairs and monastery at Mount Zhixing (fig. 21), and then forward to the fantastic stones of Mount Tianping (fig. 22). Next, the viewer passes the strange rocks surrounding the Pond of Heaven (fig. 22); goes on to the cave and pagoda atop Mount Lingyan (fig. 23); travels over to the nine-arch bridge and summit pagoda of Stone Lake (fig. 23); then goes on to the pagoda, canal, and bridge of Hushan (fig. 24); and ends at the blossoming plum trees of Dengwei (fig. 24). Here, an understanding of the codified symbols that identify each site helps to guide the viewer through the entire Suzhou region represented in the handscroll. In addition to a familiarity with the individual sites depicted, however, a comprehensive understanding of the topography of Suzhou was necessary to understand the scroll in its entirety because the sites are ordered in such a way as to diagram a circular, counterclockwise tour from one to the next, excepting the final two. Maps suggest it would have been easier to boat along a larger, suburban canal from Stone Lake to Hushan and Dengwei (see Map 1).

“Famous sites” paintings present the opposite problem of the “honorific” paintings: their subject matter is easily identified, but the recipients are not. The lack of personalized documentation on these works suggests they were produced not for people with official positions, but for local gentry, educated local elites, and visitors, groups for whom the cultural capital of the famous sites illustrated would have offered more appeal than a description of their own personal circumstances. The lack of personalization does not preclude the possibility that “famous sites” paintings were acquired by the most elite officials and gentry, but it does suggest that painters did not prepare them with this group in mind.

Several subcategories of “famous sites” paintings may be identified by the presence or absence of inscriptions, and further by their content, placement, and calligraphic style. One subcategory contains works that are simply signed and dated by the artist, with no information given about a buyer or recipient.<sup>78</sup> Many of these were produced by individual artists, such as the album *Ten Views of Gusu* (*Gusu shi jing*) by Wen Boren, while others were made by groups of artists, such as the ten-leaf album called *Ancient Sites of Sutai* (*Sutai guji*) by Yuan Shangdong, Zhang





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Zhang Hong, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*. Dated 1648. Handscroll, ink and color on paper; 25.9 x 206.8 cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou. Detail of Hushan and Dengwei.

Hong, Sheng Maoye (fl. ca. 1594–1640), Chen Guan (fl. ca. 1604–1640), Wu Ling (fl. ca. 1637–1671), and Ge Xu (fl. ca. 17th century), in which each painter produced what may have been the famous site he specialized in. These works could have been prepared well in advance of purchase and no doubt cost much less than an inscribed album. The coordinated nature of these group efforts suggests that someone was orchestrating their production. This may have been the owner of a painting or mounting shop that specialized in works of this type, or one of the artists may have acted as a go-between to augment his income.<sup>79</sup>

Short inscriptions in which the painter identifies the recipient and date and occasionally states the circumstances under which the work was completed differentiate another subcategory of “famous sites” paintings. Zhang Hong inscribed the *Twelve Views of Sutai* album discussed above: “On a fall day in 1638, I lodged at the study of the Zhuang family in Piling [Wujin county, Jiangsu, north of Lake Tai], where I casually painted these twelve leaves of Sutai [Suzhou]. Although this is just to while away the summer heat, I am ashamed I could not achieve a likeness” [Text D].<sup>80</sup> At the conclusion of the handscroll, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*, he wrote, “in the third month of 1648, I sketched this at a guest house in Piling” [Text E]. Zhang’s mention of Piling may indicate this scroll was done for the Zhuang family or it may have been done for some member of the Piling branch of the Tang family, with whom he had been friends for years.<sup>81</sup> The Tangs were a wealthy family of artists with an impressive art collection who, despite their many achievements, had remained unsuccessful in placing a son in official service.<sup>82</sup> Hence, this type of unobtrusive allusion to a certain family in the artist’s inscription on a “famous sites” painting would serve to place the family within the sphere of elite Suzhou culture, a position a good deal higher than any painting customized to their personal circumstances could have achieved. Yet, it also indicates their wealth in sponsoring a painter and their good taste in avoiding works tricked up with forged calligraphy, such as those discussed in the following section.

Another subcategory of “famous sites” paintings are albums whose painted leaves are matched with leaves of calligraphy seemingly inscribed by famous literati, such as the album, *Unexcelled Prospects of Wu* (*Wuzhong shenglan tu*; 1632), by Zhang Hong, which boasts poetry ascribed to famous calligraphers, includ-



ing Dong Qichang (1555–1636) and Chen Jiru (1558–1639).<sup>83</sup> Although the paintings appear to be genuine works by the artists who signed them, the inscriptions attributed to famous calligraphers and personalities of the time are not. They were produced within the well-developed Suzhou forgery trade.<sup>84</sup> On this album, for example, an inscription “signed” by the illustrious late Ming official Wen Zhenmeng celebrates Sword Pond and the canal behind Tiger Hill as follows:

King Wu buried his swords many autumns ago,  
and still, on clear nights the light shines up from the pool.  
After Baigong [Prince of Chu] opened up a path here,  
flutes and drums play on painted boats that sightsee here in all four seasons.  
[Text F]

The poem “written” by Wei Shizhong (fl. 17th century) for the Stone Lake leaf reads:

Where the mist and water of Stone Lake meet the length of the sky,  
travelers row fishing boats from west to east and back again.  
Leisurely reclining on a spring outing, they turn their heads to dwell upon  
the Mount Shangfang terrace temple amidst the misty green hills.  
[Text G]

The trite content and brevity of these poems bespeak a forger’s commercial association with the artist or go-between, rather than a personal relationship with a recipient. In addition, although the calligraphic “impersonations” of the writing are very good, the arrangement of the characters within each inscription is too neatly balanced, and the uniformity of the position of the celebrity signatures is suspicious. The careful inclusion of each calligraphic script type, including the tasteful and antiquarian clerical script, is also suspect.<sup>85</sup>

A final subcategory is represented by Yuan Shangtong’s *Twelve Views of Sutai* and the album, *Ten Views of Gusu* (1648), by Bian Wenyu. Both present “famous sites” paintings coupled with authentic inscriptions by local elites, such as the calligrapher Wen Chongguang and calligrapher and painter Shen Hao (1586–ca. 1661).<sup>86</sup> Some of the paintings within this category were acquired or ordered for a specific person. All the leaves of poetry in the Bian Wenyu album, for example, are dedicated to a Mr. Yang, who appears to have been a teacher of many, if not all, of the inscribers. Inscriptions on other paintings within this category, such as Yuan Shangtong’s album, do not mention a recipient. Their poems focus on the sites illustrated, with few personal or literary allusions.

“Famous sites” paintings may also have appealed to buyers who had grown wealthy from commerce and desired to elevate their social status by acquiring paintings with sophisticated subject matter. According to Zhang Hong’s biographer, as Zhang was forced to sell his paintings because of the impoverished state of his family, “merchants” could acquire his best work when he and his dependents were in most desperate need. Consequently, dealers in rice and salt had amassed large collections of his paintings.<sup>87</sup> Within the complex urban society of seventeenth-century Suzhou, the designation “merchant” does little to clarify who the buyers of Zhang’s work were. The term could apply not only to dealers in rice and salt, but also to the owner of the most famous grocery store in Suzhou, who had turned to commerce after failing to pass the official examinations, or to the countless officials and elite gentry who participated in business.<sup>88</sup> As Huang Xingzeng (1490–1540) stated, “the official gentry in Wuzhong [Suzhou] often consider doing business as something urgent... from lending, pawnbroking, and trade, to selling salt and wine, their methods extract double profits from the commoners.”<sup>89</sup> Although Zhang Hong painted a wide variety of subjects, his paintings of famous sites account for a large proportion of his work. No doubt many of these paintings were purchased by a variety of collectors.

The comparatively inexpensive production of the “famous sites” paintings also suggests that some may have been intended for the tourists and pilgrims who traveled about on the waterways of Suzhou, “glittering with shining colors,” aboard the “painted boats that tour the mountains.”<sup>90</sup> On festival days, such as the very popular Lotus Flower Lake Festival in summer and the Mid-Autumn Festival, female tourists could visit the famous monasteries and natural sites of Suzhou, while during religious festivals, pilgrims of both genders flocked to the renowned monasteries of the area.<sup>91</sup> The “famous sites” paintings may have been prepared with this group in mind. They depict fewer sites, contain fewer leaves, and are often smaller in size than the “honorific” paintings, making them easy to transport home. While a single artist produced most of the “famous sites” albums that I have examined here, in those produced by groups, it appears that each artist painted the scene that was his specialty. Yuan Shangtong, for example, painted almost every extant version of Hushan seen in group-produced albums. Perhaps such a situation evolved as a way to speed the process along. With less time, energy, and materials used to produce these works, artists could paint a greater number of them, and the works could be sold more cheaply to those wishing to remember their experience. The “famous sites” paintings had been pared down to an established visual experience of select codified elements that would have taken less time and thought than the unique views and detailed compositions of the “honorific” paintings, while the preestablished components of the trips they illustrated would

have appealed all the more to buyers seeking to remember their visits in the historically and religiously sanctioned light of the past.

If the cultural cachet of the visual experiences captured in the “famous sites” paintings was to reflect upon this disparate group of owners, then the paintings must be conspicuously displayed. Fortunately, the codification of these painted visual experiences was so complete that they could be shrunk, enlarged, or extended to any format. The greatest numbers were produced as small albums that may have been purchased to show to family and friends in correlation with the narration of a trip to the sites illustrated. Many artists also presented single sites in the inexpensive and easily displayed fan format.<sup>92</sup> On the more expensive end, Zhang Hong created a tour-de-force in the handscroll format with his long scroll from 1648, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*, which is discussed above (figs. 20–24). His complex composition linking the sites of Suzhou would have allowed the owner of the painting an uninterrupted narration of his tour of the entire Suzhou area. Yuan Shangtong produced an ostentatiously large display by dividing a set of the “famous sites” paintings—depicting Mount Zhixing, Hushan, Mount Lingyan, the Pond of Heaven, Xukou, and what may be Dengwei—across six large hanging scrolls that could have filled the walls of a studio or reception hall.<sup>93</sup>

### Conclusion

The late Ming painters of Suzhou developed a distinctive topographical vocabulary and site-specific views to distinguish certain visual experiences. Suzhou place paintings illustrate accessible, public experiences of landscape, as in the codified topography and synoptic views of the “famous sites” paintings and the private, personalized visions of an area of jurisdiction, as seen from the viewpoint of the “honorific” paintings. Each work illustrates an identifiable place from a particular vantage point, thereby implying where the person doing the viewing stands as well. These vantage points also locate the viewer socially, or at least suggest where he would like to be. People in official position were presented with an all-encompassing view, while local scholars, artisans, and merchants, as well as visitors to Suzhou such as tourists and pilgrims, were given an interactive view. In these paintings of Suzhou, the view or visual experience was of paramount importance, for it captured not only site and sight, but also place and perception.

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## NOTES

- I would like to thank John Dardess for patiently correcting the translations for the “honorific” painting inscriptions and Keith McMahon for his help with the “famous sites” painting inscriptions. All mistakes that remain are my own. I would also like to thank Patricia Berger for her support and advice. I am grateful to Li Heyun of Suzhou University and the staff of the Suzhou Museum who helped me transcribe the painting inscriptions. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous readers for their careful reading of the manuscript and helpful comments. Travel and research for this project was partially funded by a Louise Wallace Hackney Fellowship for the Study of Chinese Art from the American Oriental Society and a research grant from the Metropolitan Center for Far Eastern Art Studies, Tokyo.
1. See, for example, James Cahill, “Huang Shan Paintings as Pilgrimage Pictures,” in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, ed. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 253–58; and James Cahill, “Late Ming Albums and European Printed Books,” in *The Early Illustrated Book: Essays in Honor of Lessing J. Rosenwald* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1982), 153–59. For Zhang Hong, see James Cahill, “Chang Hung and the Limits of Representation,” in *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 1–35; and June Li and James Cahill, *Paintings of Zhi Garden by Zhang Hong: Revisiting a Seventeenth-Century Chinese Garden* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1996).
  2. Anne De Coursey Clapp, *The Painting of T'ang Yin* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 30–37, 238; and Li-tsui Flora Fu, “The Representation of Famous Mountains: Chinese Landscape Paintings of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1995).
  3. First quotation from James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 102. The following quotations, respectively, are from Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, 7; Cahill, “Huang Shan Paintings as Pilgrimage Pictures,” 255; and the last three quotations are from Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 83.
  4. Hal Foster, ed., *Vision and Visuality*, Dia Art Foundation, Discussions in Contemporary Culture (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 2:ix, xiii. Craig Clunas and Eugene Y. Wang have most recently addressed issues of “vision” and “visuality” in Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*; and Wang, “Watching the Steps: Peripatetic Vision in Medieval China,” in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 116–42.
  5. Kenneth Ganza, “The Artist as Traveler: The Origin and Development of Travel as a Theme in Chinese Landscape Painting of the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1990), 12, n.9.
  6. Eugene Y. Wang, “Tope and Topos: The Leifeng Pagoda and the Discourse of the Demonic,” in *Writing and Materiality in China*, ed. Judith Zeitlin and L. Liu (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 488.

7. Cahill, "Huang Shan Paintings as Pilgrimage Pictures," 253.
8. Kathryn Liscomb, "The Eight Views of Beijing: Politics in Literati Art," *Artibus Asiae* 49, no. 1/2 (1989): 127–52; Kathryn Maureen Liscomb, *Learning From Mount Hua: A Chinese Physician's Illustrated Travel Record and Painting Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Joseph P. McDermott, "The Making of a Chinese Mountain, Huangshan: Politics and Wealth in Chinese Art," *Asian Cultural Studies* (Tokyo) 17 (March 1989): 145–76.
9. Wu Pei-yi, "An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T'ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century," in Naquin and Yü, *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, 68. Both Susan Naquin and Timothy Brook translate *mingsheng* as "famous sights." Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2000), 254; and Timothy Brook, *Geographical Sources of Ming-Qing History* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 198), 97, B83; 188, L100; 231, P1. According to Naquin, the term became common vernacular only in the late Ming dynasty when employed by the literatus Cao Xuequan (1574–1646, *jìnshì* 1595) in his work, *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Famous Geographical Sites of the Great Ming Dynasty* [*Da Ming yitong mingsheng zhi*]. See Naquin, *Peking*, 254.
10. Naquin, *Peking*, 111, 270; Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, and the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1993), 110, and Brook, *Geographical Sources*, 59; Jonathan Chaves, "The Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theory of the Kung-an School," in *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 359; Siu-Kit Wong, "Ch'ing and Ching in the Critical Writings of Wang Fu-chih," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao*, ed. Adele Rickett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 122; and Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 30; 585.
11. Wong, "Ch'ing and Ching," 122; and Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 585.
12. Xu Xiake *youji*, ed. Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1980), 1141; translation from Julian Ward, *Xu Xiake (1587–1641): The Art of Travel Writing* (Surrey, Great Britain: Curzon Press, 2001), 119.
13. Ward, *Xu Xiake*, 120.
14. Marsha Smith, "Regional, Economic, and Social Factors in Late Ming Painting," in *The Restless Landscape: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Period* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1971), 33–37; Elizabeth Fulder, "Professional Painters in Fukien and Nanking," in *Restless Landscape*, 103–14; and James Cahill, *The Distant Mountains: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Dynasty, 1570–1644* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1982), 63–86, 175–211. Alice Rosemary Merrill provides an example of the interaction between Suzhou and Nanjing in her discussion of the artist Wen Jia's frequent trips there. See Merrill, "Wen Chia (1501–1583): Derivation and Innovation" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1981), 29–31. Many of the painters discussed here painted the topography of other cities in Jiangnan, particularly Nanjing. For the topographical painters of the Anhui school, see James Cahill, *Shadows of Mt. Huang* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1981), and for the topographical painting of Beijing, see Liscomb, "The Eight Views of Beijing," 127–52; and Naquin, *Peking*, 111–12.
15. See Michael Marmé, "Population and Possibility in Ming (1368–1644) Suzhou: A Quantified Model," *Ming Studies* 12 (Spring 1981): 29–64; Michael Marmé, "Heaven on Earth: The Rise of Suzhou, 1127–1550," in *Cities of Jiangnan in Late Imperial China*, ed. Linda Cooke Johnson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 17–45; Michael Marmé, *Suzhou: Where the Goods of All the Provinces Converge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); F. W. Mote, "A Millennium of Chinese Urban History: Form, Time, and Space Concepts in Soochow," *Rice University Studies* 59, no. 4 (Fall 1973), 35–65; and Yinong Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 9–28.
16. The complicated matter of discerning who was painting for pleasure, who was supplementing their income, and who practiced painting as their sole livelihood is an underlying theme in James Cahill's *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Clapp's study of Tang Yin (1470–1524) analyzes his artistic choices as a famous personality and financially dependent artist (*The Painting of Tang Yin*, 25–100). Craig Clunas examines the complex "patterns of elite exchange" that Wen Zhengming utilized in *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470–1559* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 158. For Lu Zhi, see Louise Ripple Yuhas, "The Landscape Art of Lu Chih (1496–1576)" (Ph.D.

- dissertation, University of Michigan, 1979).
17. For Wen Jia's ten-leaf album, *Record of a Journey to Two Caves* [*Liangdong jiyoutu*], which was done in ink on paper and is now in the Shanghai Museum, see *Zhongguo gudai shuhua tumu*, 23 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu, 1986–2001) (hereafter *ZGGDSHTM*), 3: 1–965. For Qian Gong's *Fuyuan Monastery at Dongting West Mountain* [*Dongting xishan Fuyuansi tu*], which is comprised of two album leaves now mounted as a hand scroll and is in the collection of the Suzhou Museum, see *ZGGDSHTM*, 6:1–149. This is the topic of my forthcoming article on fundraising paintings. For Tang Yin's painting *Gazing in Sorrow at the Fields* (1509), see Clapp, *The Painting of T'ang Yin*, 33–37.
  18. Clapp, *The Painting of T'ang Yin*, 47–49.
  19. Many thanks to Ling-en Lu of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art for sharing her unpublished paper on the *Taibai Mountains* painting with me; the work is now held in the Liaoning Provincial Museum and is reproduced in Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1997), fig. 165; and *ZGGDSHTM*, 15: 1–080. See also Richard Vinograd, "Wang Meng's *Pien Mountains: The Landscape of Eremitism in Later Fourteenth Century Chinese Painting*" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 375–81.
  20. The series of paintings that make up *Journey by Water*, also called *A Water Route*, are listed in *Gugong shu hua lu*, rev. ed., 4 vols. (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1965), 4:56–57; and Hu Jing et al., *Shiqu baoji xubian* (1793; reprint, Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1971), 2675–76; and discussed in Ganzha, "The Artist as Traveler," 167–71; and Louise Yuhas, "Wang Shih-Chen as Patron," in *Artists and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting*, ed. Chu-tsing Li (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1989), 144.
  21. The painters are Zhang Hong, Yuan Shangdong, Wang Qujun, Feng Ting, Chen Si, Zhu Zhi, Zhang Fengyi, and Ming Xu. Held by the Suzhou Museum, its leaves measure 32.7 x 64.5 centimeters. See *ZGGDSHTM*, 6:1–180. The title is translated as *Resignation and Leave of Kou Shen*, and four of its leaves are reproduced in color in *Suzhou Bowuguan cang Ming Qing shuhua* [The paintings and calligraphy of the Ming and Qing dynasties collected by the Suzhou Museum] (Beijing: Wenwu, 2006), 74–75. I am grateful to Mr. Qian Gonglin, Mr. Yang Wentao, Mr. Qian Yucheng, and the staff of the Suzhou Museum for allowing me to view this painting and several other works in their collection. James Cahill includes a short discussion of this painting in *The Painter's Practice*, 154, n. 23.
  22. The painters are Lu Shiren, Zhang Yuanju, Zhang Tao, Zhang Yuanshi, Yao Jun, Qian Gong (fl. ca. 1573–1619), and Sun Zhi (ca. 1535–ca. 1601). Held by the Nanjing Museum, its leaves measure 25.5 x 50 centimeters (*ZGGDSHTM*, 7:24–0167). I am grateful to the staff of the Nanjing Museum for allowing me to view this painting and several other works in their collection.
  23. The colophon is reproduced in *ZGGDSHTM* 7:24–0167. All translations are by the author unless noted otherwise.
  24. This is a reference to Fan Chengda (1126–93). See *Zhongwen dacidian*, 10 vols. (Taipei: Zhonghua xueshuyuan, 1973), 7:31472.83.
  25. "Four Steeds" is the name of a poem from the *Book of Odes* in which a government official wishes to return home but cannot because of his many duties for the king. See *Shi san jing*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan, 1991), 1, *Maoshi*, *Xiaoya*, 296. For an English translation, see Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 134.
  26. To "borrow Mr. Kou" refers to the later-Han-dynasty (25–220) story of Kou Xun, a meritorious official who went on a southern tour with his emperor. When the imperial party arrived at Mr. Kou's old jurisdiction, the people there begged the emperor to allow them to "borrow Mr. Kou" to serve as an official there for a year. See *Zhongwen dacidian*, 1:779.50.
  27. Mount Xian is a scenic mountain in Xiangyang District, Hubei, made famous by Yang Gu of the Jin dynasty (265–420), who loved and frequented its scenery. See *Zhongwen dacidian*, 3:8287.1(6).
  28. Alfreda Murck discusses how this style illustrated the political hierarchy of the times in *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute and Harvard University Press, 2000), 34; and Wen C. Fong discusses the style and composition of this painting as a "conceptual vision of the macrocosmic universe" in *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 8th–14th Century* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 83–86, fig. 30.
  29. Many had been painted prior to the late Ming. The Jinchang Gate area, for example, was depicted in earlier works that James Cahill calls "parting at the shore" scenes that were prepared as farewell presents for friends. See, for example, Tang Yin's *Parting at Jinchang* in the National Palace Museum, Taipei,



which is reproduced in *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368–1580* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978), 197 and fig. 91; and it is discussed as a mid-Ming “honorific topographical scroll” in Clapp, *The Painting of T’ang Yin*, 154–55, fig. 56.

30. The unconventional sites and views found in some honorific topographical paintings may also have been active components of *hao* compositions in which elements of the picture illustrate “the literal meaning of the characters” of the *hao* (chosen name) of the recipient. Clapp defines and discusses this type of painting during the middle Ming dynasty in *The Painting of T’ang Yin*, 61–66. For a late Ming example of a *hao* painting, see Merrill, “Wen Chia,” 54–55. In his discussion of an earlier painting of a specific place, *The Bian Mountains* by Wang Meng, Richard Vinograd has called paintings of personalized topographical sites “landscape of property.” See “Family Properties: Personal Context and Cultural Pattern in Wang Meng’s *Pien Mountains* of 1366,” *Ars Orientalis* 13 (1982), 11.
31. A gentleman’s love and understanding of nature, as symbolic of his erudition and comprehension of the underlying principles of the universe, had been utilized within the painting tradition for centuries. This tradition has been traced to the essay of the reclusive scholar-painter Jing Hao (fl. ca. 870–ca. 930). See Kiyohiko Munakata, *Ching Hao’s “Pi-fa-chi”: A Note on the Art of Brush*, Supplementum 31 (Ascona, Switz.: Artibus Asiae, 1974); and Wen C. Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 76–77.
32. This particular scene of the painting called *Spring Festival on the River or Peace Reigns over the River*, attributed to Zhang Zeduan (fl. early 12th c.), is

reproduced in Robert L. Thorp and Richard Ellis Vinograd, *Chinese Art & Culture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001), 228, fig. 7–3. For various opinions concerning this scroll, see Julia K. Murray, “Water Under a Bridge: Further Thoughts on the *Qingming* Scroll,” *Journal of Sung-Yüan Studies* 27 (1997): 99–107; Linda Cooke Johnson, “The Place of *Qingming shanghe tu* in the Historical Geography of Song Dynasty Dongjing,” *Journal of Sung-Yüan Studies* 26 (1996): 145–82; Valerie Hansen, “The Mystery of the *Qingming* Scroll and Its Subject: The Case Against Kaifeng,” *Journal of Sung-Yüan Studies* 26 (1996): 183–200.

33. Chen Si painted this leaf. Niu Ruolin and Wang Huanru, eds., *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1642, *Tianyige cang Mingdai fangzhi xuan kan xubian* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), 1:178, 4b.
34. When Jia Cong of the Later Han dynasty arrived to govern Jizhou, he ordered his driver to lift the curtains of the carriage so that he could see and hear everything. See *Zhongwen dacidian*, 8:35293.3.
35. Even in drought, rain fell on the areas that Zheng Hong governed during the Later Han dynasty. Because he was a good official, rain fell wherever his carriage passed. See *Zhongwen dacidian*, 9:42806.19.
36. The gazetteer *Suzhou fuzhi*, 6 vols. (1883; reprint, Taipei: Chengwen, 1970) 4:21 (1767), quotes from Gu Yanwu’s epitaph for Kou Shen, which describes in detail Kou Shen’s accomplishments in Suzhou.
37. Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610) discusses the problem of false expectations in his account of a trip to the scenic sites of Zhejiang, saying, “When I first came to Ling-yen [Lingyan] Temple, I suspected that the poem about this place by Sung Chih-wen [Song Zhiwen] would turn out to be inaccurate; I felt that the ancients,

when they selected scenes (*ching*) [*jing*], were like the modern writers who pick [images] indiscriminately. But when I climbed to T’ao-kuang [Taoguang] Cloister, I realized for the first time that in such of his phrases as ‘along the Che [Zhe] River,’ ‘above the vast sea,’ ‘grabbing creepers,’ and ‘scooped-out wooden bowls,’ each word conjured up a picture of this place, something other old poets could not achieve.” Yuan Hongdao, *Yuan Zhonglang quanji* (Taipei, 1964), *youji*, 14 and 15; translation from Chaves, “The Panoply of Images,” 356.

38. For a discussion of “collective memory” and “cultural memory,” see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Also see Pierre Nora’s discussion of “sites of memory” in “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–25. Robert E. Harrist Jr., discusses the literati tradition of writing on the landscape in “Reading Chinese Mountains: Landscape and Calligraphy in China,” *Orientations* 31, no. 10 (December, 2000): 64–69.
39. The significance of national topography, such as the Buddhist marchmounts and Daoist caverns, has been discussed in studies such as Joseph P. McDermott, “The Making of a Chinese Mountain,” and Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains in Chinese Art* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991). The role of this sophisticated symbolism in the development of specific institutions and structures has also been examined by historians such as Linda A. Walton in “Southern Sung Academies and the Construction of Sacred Space,” in *Landscape, Culture, and Power in Chinese Society*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh, China Research Mono-

- graph 49, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, 1998), 23–51; and Tobie Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
40. See Qian Gu, *Wudu wencui xiji*, in *Siku quanshu zhenben chuiji* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1969–81), vols. 377–88. Qian Gu could not afford a library and studied from Wen Zhengming's collection in order to prepare this text. See Tsao Jr-lien (Jerlian), "Remembering Suzhou: Urbanism in Late Imperial China" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1992), 14, n. 41.
  41. Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, 51–125; Liscomb, "The Eight Views of Beijing."
  42. *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), 181–84. The two complete versions of this hand scroll are *Famous Sights of Wu* (*Wuzhong shenglan tu*) in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, and *The Scenery Around Suzhou* (*Suzhou shanshui quan tu*) in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. *The White-Cloud Spring* is a partial version of the handscroll that was boxed together with the Nelson-Atkins Museum's *Famous Sights of Wu*. For a reproduction of the *Famous Sights of Wu*, see *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, 181–84, no. 152; for *The Scenery Around Suzhou*, see *Wupai hua jiushinian zhan—Ninety Years of Wu School Painting* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1975), 226–29, 319, 380, no. 201; and for *The White-Cloud Spring*, see Cahill, *Parting at the Shore*, fig. 41. The *Famous Sights of Wu* handscroll in the Nelson-Atkins Museum includes renderings of these Suzhou sites: Xukou, Tiger Hill, Hushan, Stone Lake, Mount Tianping, Mount Zhixing, Mount Lingyan, and the Pond of Heaven.
  43. The famous album *Twelve Views of Tiger Hill* (*Huqiu tu*) attributed to Shen Zhou could be an original or reliable copy of his work. For a reproduction, see *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting*, 187–90, fig. 155. The same may be said for a painting of Stone Lake attributed to Lu Zhi that is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and is discussed by Kojiro Tomita and A. Kaiming Chiu in "Shih Hu (Stone Lake): A Chinese Scroll Painting by Lu Chih (1496–1576)," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston) 49 (February, 1951): 34–39.
  44. For a few examples, see the poems on the Pond of Heaven, Tiger Hill, Mount Tianping, Mount Zhixing, and Stone Lake in Wen Zhengming, *Wen Zhengming ji*, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1987) 2:1046–50. Craig Clunas discusses other written records of Wen Zhengming's journeys to various Suzhou sites in *Elegant Debts*, 98–102. A painting by Wen Zhengming entitled the *Four Views of Gusu* is discussed in Ganzha, "The Artist as Traveler," 123–24. The plethora of extant Suzhou place paintings attributed to Wen Zhengming includes Hushan Bridge (*ZGGDSHTM*, 7:24-0051); the Pond of Heaven (*ZGGDSHTM*, 12:7-0016); Stone Lake (*ZGGDSHTM*, 2:1-0553); and Mount Tianping (Clunas, *Elegant Debts*, 100, fig. 43; and Richard Edwards, *The Art of Wen Cheng-ming [1470–1559]* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1976], 60–63, figs. X, 6, and 7). The Stone Lake painting is discussed by Jonathan Hay in "Wen Zhengming, Stone Lake, and the Aesthetics of Disjunction," in *The History of Painting in East Asia: Essays on Scholarly Method*, ed. Naomi Noble Richard and Donald E. Brix (Taipei: Rock Publishing, 2008).
  45. Yuhas, "The Landscape Art of Lu Chih," 45–46.
  46. Lu Shihua, *Wuyue suojian shuhualu* (1776; reprint, Taipei: Hanhua, 1972), 35–43. The album is discussed in Yuhas, "The Landscape Art of Lu Chih," 29.
  47. *Twelve Views of Sutai* by Yuan Shangtong is a twelve-leaf album done in ink and color on paper, measuring 24.7 x 29.3 centimeters. Each of the twelve painted leaves is paired with a leaf of calligraphy. It is held in the Shanghai Museum and reproduced in *ZGGDSHTM*, 3:1-1532 (the calligraphy leaves are not reproduced). *Twelve Views of Sutai* by Zhang Hong is dated 1638. It is a twelve-leaf album done in ink and color on silk, measuring 30.5 x 24 centimeters. It is held in the Beijing Palace Museum and is reproduced in *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang*, ed. Wai-Kam Ho (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1992), vols. 1 and 2, pl. 102. I am grateful to Mr. Yu Hui and the staff of the Beijing Palace Museum for allowing me to view this painting.
- Other paintings that illustrate the same sites and basic characteristics discussed below include: *Unexcelled Prospects of Wu* (*Wuzhong shenglan tu*), 1632, a ten-leaf album by Zhang Hong listed in the collection of the Beijing Antique Store in *ZGGDSHTM*, 1:12-063 (it could not be found when I visited); *Landscapes*, 1628, a twelve-leaf album by Zhang Hong in the Tianjin Antique Company (*ZGGDSHTM*, 8:6-023); *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water* (*Qianshan yuanshui tu*), 1648, a handscroll by Zhang Hong in the Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou (*ZGGDSHTM*, 11:1-096); *Unexcelled Prospects of Sutai* (*Sutai shenglan tu*), 1637, a ten-leaf

- album, coupled with ten leaves of calligraphy, by Shao Mi (ca. 1595–ca. 1642) and others in the Shanghai Museum (*ZGGDSHTM*, 4:1-1720); *Ten Views of Gusu* (*Gusu shi jing*), a ten-leaf album by Wen Boren in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (*Gugong shu hua lu*, 4:49–50); *Ancient Sites of Sutai* (*Sutai guji*), a ten-leaf album by Chen Guan (fl. ca. 1604–40) and others in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (nos. 6645–49, Asian Art Archives, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor); and *Ten Views of Gusu* (*Gusu shi jing*), 1648, a ten-leaf album, coupled with ten leaves of calligraphy, by Bian Wenyu (fl. ca. 1620–70), in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Museum (*ZGGDSHTM*, 14:1-043). I am grateful to Mr. Shan Guolin, Mr. Huang Fukang, and the staff of the Shanghai Museum, as well as the staff of the Tianjin Antique Company, for allowing me to view paintings in their collections.
48. The illustration of snow on sites located in the southern city of Suzhou is not as fantastical as it may seem, as the massive snow storm of January 2008 and the photograph on the cover and frontispiece of Zhou Hongdu, *Lingyanshan* (Suzhou: Guwuxuan, 1998) attest. Likely snow was especially common during the seventeenth century, at the height of the “Little Ice Age,” which began in the fourteenth century and ended in the mid-nineteenth century. The coldest temperatures were recorded between 1650 and 1750. See Robert B. Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125–26, 48, 201.
  49. See Yuan Hongdao’s description of the late Ming crowds that visited Tiger Hill during the Mid-Autumn Festival in Richard E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1994), 306–307.
  50. The seasonal references of these paintings place them in the tradition of those Southern Song dynasty album leaves depicting aspects of the annual festivals of the lunar calendar and natural occurrences, such as the Hangzhou Bore. See Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite Moments: West Lake and Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2001), 37–39.
  51. Gazetteers place the beginnings of the complex in the Spring and Autumn Period (770–403 BCE). Sword Pond first acquired its name in 496 BCE when the king of Wu was buried beneath it with three thousand of his treasure swords. Depending on the date of their visit, viewers were either looking at a monastery built in the second year of the Zhengtong era (1437) or the eleventh year of the Chongzhen era (1638). The Yunyan (Cloudy Cliff) or Huqiushan (Tiger Hill) Monastery was first established in 327 CE by two high officials of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420), the brothers Wang Xun and Wang Min, who converted their villas on Tiger Hill into two temples on the eastern and western sides of Sword Pond. These two temples were destroyed in the Huichang suppression and were replaced between 995–97. See Lu Zhaoyu and Ren Zhaolin, *Hufu zhi* (1790, Suzhou: Guwuxuan, 1995), 87, 93, 314, 399–400.
  52. For a brief description of the Xu River today, see *Suzhou shizhi*, 3 vols., ed. Suzhou shi difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin, 1995) 1:483.
  53. Description based on direct observation, September 18, 1999. See also Niu and Wang, eds., *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1:56b (328).
  54. Zou Xiqing, *Suzhou zhi li* (Suzhou: Guwuxuan, 1994), 87.
  55. Description based on direct observation, October 2, 1999.
  56. This site begins Zhang Hong’s handscroll of 1648, *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water*, which is discussed below.
  57. For the Waicheng Canal, see *Suzhou shi ditu ce* (Fuzhou: Fujian sheng ditu, 2003), 17–18; *Suzhou fengjing liyou tu* (Harbin: Harbin ditu, 1999); *Suzhou shizhi*, 1: 483.
  58. *Tianping shan* (Suzhou: Suzhou Tianpingshan guanlichu, ca. 1999); Huang Zhenwei, *Tianping shan* (Suzhou: Guwuxuan, 1998), 44–46; and *Suzhou shizhi*, 1:721–23. See also Niu and Wang, *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1:299–301, 42a–43a. Richard E. Strassberg translates a record of a visit to this mountain written by Gao Qi (1336–1374), in *Inscribed Landscapes*, 283–87.
  59. There were already Fan ancestral graves here in 1044 (Huang, *Tianping shan*, 12); for the Fan Zhongyan shrine, see Huang, *Tianping shan*, 31–37; for the famous maples of Mount Tianping, see Huang, *Tianping shan*, 29–30.
  60. Description based on direct observation, September 18, 1999.
  61. The unique group of buildings signifying the summit of Tiger Hill constitutes the most detailed description of any of the Suzhou sites. This could be due to its wide popularity and the legendary history of each element pictured, but it could also be attributed to the existence of a pre-established Tiger Hill iconography, which an informed public would have expected from painters of Suzhou sites. A Yuan dynasty rendering of Tiger Hill by Cui Yanfu (active 1340s) from 1346, for example, contains all the elements found in the two renderings of Tiger Hill discussed above (Hou-chenshang-chai collection, Asian Art Archives, University of Michigan,



- #33,892–98). David Sensabaugh cites another literary gathering that occurred here in 1351 and its connection with a later set of paintings by Chen Ruyan, in “Life at Jade Mountain: Notes on the Life of the Man of Letters in Fourteenth Century Wu Society,” *Suzuki Kei Sensei Kanreki Kinen: Chugoku Kaiga shi ronshu* (Articles on Chinese painting history: In commemoration of Professor Suzuki Kei’s sixtieth birthday) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1981), 55. See also Chu-tsing Li, “The Development of Painting in Soochow During the Yüan Dynasty,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1972), 483–505.
62. This position was the best from which to view the Mid-Autumn Festival entertainments on the day I visited the site, September 24, 1999.
63. The inscription on the leaf for the Hushan site in Zhang Hong’s *Twelve Views of Sutan* album, for example, is erroneously translated “Autumn Colors on Tiger Hill” (*The Century of Tung Ch’i-ch’ang*, 2: 116).
64. The site takes its name not from the landmass on which the Guangfu Pagoda is built, but the area opposite. The Guangfu Pagoda and Hushan Bridge were recently rebuilt. The temple at the base of the pagoda was still under construction and was not open to the public on the day I visited, October 2, 1999. I have taken the general location of the pagoda and bridge as close to their late Ming predecessors, since the most recent pagoda reconstruction, for example, is situated in the same place as the one before it, as is evident when compared to an early photograph of the site. See *Lao Suzhou: Bainian jiu jing/Old Suzhou: An Album of Century-Old Photos* (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin, 1999), 124, fig. 255. For the Guangfu Pagoda, Hushan Bridge, and Hushan, see Yang Xiaodong, *Guangfu* (Suzhou: Guwuxuan, 1998), 2–6, 14–28; and Niu and Wang, eds., *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi* 1:252–53, 18b–19a.
65. For a discussion of the complexity and convenience of the canals of Suzhou, see Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 129–42.
66. The preponderance of Hushan paintings produced by Yuan Shangtong suggests this subject was one of his specialties.
67. So many paintings of Panchi were produced by Zhang Hong that it seems to have been a specialty. When I visited these two sites (October 2, 1999), locals told me that plum trees are abundant in this area.
68. Dengwei was romantically referred to as Xiangxuehai (Sea of Fragrant Snow). It was at its height through the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), but by the middle of the twentieth century it had declined almost completely. At the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (1949), the government helped the area’s farmers to redevelop it, but these efforts were obliterated during the periods of the Great Leap Forward (1958–59) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). At present it is just beginning to be restored (*Suzhou zhi li*, 55). Also see Niu and Wang, *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1:252–53, 18b–19a.
69. Zhixing shan, or “Grindstone Mountain,” is located about fourteen kilometers west of Suzhou. Zhidun admired the flat rocks on the mountain and took the *hao* Zhixing, which then became the commonly used name of the mountain. The monastery pictured may be the tenth-century Baoen Monastery, or another of the subtemples built in the Xuande era (1426–36). See *Suzhou fuzhi*, 1:185, 7. See also Niu and Wang, *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1:291–93, 38a–39a.
70. For another “famous site” of Mount Zhixing by Bian Wenyu, see Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, fig. 1.4. For an earlier Ming rendering of the site by Lu Zhi, or perhaps a late Ming “copy” created in an attempt to present a lineage of the “famous sites” compositions, see fig. 1.3. For a Qing-dynasty woodblock print version of the site that may have developed from the late Ming “famous site” compositional type, see fig. 1.5.
71. Since 1943, Xi Shi Cave has been called Guanyin Cave. See Zhou, *Lingyanshan*, 36. For the history of Mount Lingyan, see Niu and Wang, *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1:217–20, 1–2b.
72. Description based on direct observation, September 18, 1999. For the history of Lingyan Monastery, see Zhou, *Lingyanshan*, 61–88, and *Suzhou Lingyanshan zhi* (Suzhou: Suzhou Lingyanshansi, 1994), 19–56.
73. *Suzhou shizhi*, 1:725–26. For Mount Shangfang, see Niu and Wang, *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, 1:236, 10b; and for Stone Lake, see 1:511, 17a.
74. Mount Shangfang and Stone Lake remain very popular tourist and pilgrimage centers. A market and amusement park area are on the western side of the lake at the base of the mountain. One of the two smaller mountains that stand directly in front of Mount Shangfang has been developed into a secondary pilgrimage site in a joint Suzhou-Japanese venture. In order to climb Mount Shangfang, one must enter the Mount Shangfang tourist complex. As an alternative to the traditional climb up the mountain path, which most believers and tourists still take, an expensive aerial tramway will take visitors directly to its summit. Description based on direct observation, September 25, 1999.
75. For the Lengqie Pagoda, see Ma Zuming, “Shangfang shan shang de Lengqieshi ta,”

- in *Suzhou guta*, ed. Xu Wentao (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua, 1998), 65–67.
76. Even today, locals visit the Stone Lake nine-arch bridge during the Mid-Autumn Festival in order to celebrate the full moon overhead and the circular “moons” created by the bridge arches and their reflections in the water. For a contemporaneous printed gazetteer picture that shows a very different perspective of Stone Lake, see Niu and Wang, *Chongzhen Wuxian zhi*, Tu, 134–35, 19b–20a.
  77. *A Thousand Mountains and Distant Water* is held in the Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou, and reproduced in *ZGGDSHTM*, 11:1–096. Many thanks to Ms. Wang Xiaohong of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum whose kindness and perseverance enabled me to view this painting.
  78. It is also possible that calligraphy leaves were originally prepared for these albums and then separated later for resale.
  79. The role of go-betweens in later Chinese painting is discussed in Cahill, *The Painter's Practice*, 39–41. Zhang Dai mentions paintings of “lake scenes” that were sold at the pilgrims’ market at West Lake in Hangzhou, and these may have been offered out of a specialty shop. See Zhang Dai, *Tao'an mengyi*, in *Aoyatang congshu*, *Baibu congshu jicheng*, ser. 64, vol. 5, pt. 2 (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), 1b. For a translation, see Wu, “An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T'ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century,” 84. Wen Dian (1633–1704), a descendant of Wen Zhengming, is known to have acted as his own agent in certain painting transactions in Suzhou. See Ellen Laing, “Wen Tien and Chin Chün-ming,” *The Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong* 8, no. 2 (December 1976): 412.
  80. For an alternate translation, see *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang*, 2: 116.
  81. Zhang recorded his friendship with Tang Xianke (b. ca. 1577), an artist and art collector, and his third son, Tang Renyu (1608–1680), also an artist, in several painting inscriptions. See Wang Chung-Lan, “Chang Hung and His ‘Reading the I-Ching in the Autumn Pavilion’” (Master’s thesis, University of Michigan, 1986), 10–11.
  82. “Tang Xianke” entry in Yu Jianhua, ed., *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu, 1981), 670; and Xu Bangda, “Tang Yuzhao, Yuguang deng jiashi kaolue,” in *Lidai shuhua jia zhuanji kaobian* (Shanghai: Renmin meishu, 1983), 52–53.
  83. *Unexcelled Prospects of Wu* has ten painted leaves and ten calligraphy leaves, measuring 25.2 x 37 centimeters and executed in ink and color on paper; it is reproduced in *ZGGDSHTM*, 1: 12–063. It is listed in the collection of the Beijing Antique Store, but could not be found when I visited.
  84. On the late Ming forgery market, see Shan Guoqiang, “The Tendency Toward Mergence of the Two Great Traditions in Late Ming Painting,” in *Proceedings of the Tung Ch'i-ch'ang International Symposium*, ed. Wai-ching Ho (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1991), 3–6–3–9. For Wai-Kam Ho’s translation of the poem “Bogus Antiques” by Shao Changheng (1637–1704), which describes the Suzhou forgery market, see Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 110–11.
  85. These are the classic traces of a good forger of works by famous calligraphers such as Dong Qichang. Dong himself discussed the prevalence of forgeries of his own work “made by people from Wu (Suzhou). Whenever I visit scholar-officials, they always show me their collections (of my works). Although I know that many of them are fakes, I never argue with these collectors.” *The Century of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang*, 1: 123.
  86. For Wen Chongguang, see Yu, *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian*, 40; and for Shen Hao, see 445. Many late Ming descendants of Wen Zhengming painted and wrote calligraphy for their livelihood. Wen Chongguang, for example, wrote poems, along with four family members, Wen Zhenheng (1585–1645), Wen Congjian (1574–1648), Wen Qianguang, and Wen Congchang (1541–1616), for a fan painting of Suzhou “famous sites” by Wen Congchang. Later still, the painter Wen Dian was known to reside occasionally at the Huiqing Monastery to the west of Suzhou’s Jinchang Gate, “where he sold his own calligraphy and painting to earn a living.” See Laing, “Wen Tien and Chin Chün-ming,” 412, fig. 3.
  87. This biography is discussed in Cahill and Li, *Paintings of the Zhi Garden by Zhang Hong*, 10. An apology for selling to merchants was a common device of the time. For a discussion of social status and collecting practices among fifteenth-century merchants and gentry, see Kathryn Maurean Liscomb, “Social Status and Art Collecting: The Collections of Shen Zhou and Wang Zhen,” *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 1 (March 1996): 111–36. Also see Timothy Brook, “The Merchant Network in Sixteenth Century China: A Discussion and Translation of Zhang Han’s ‘On Merchants,’” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24, no. 2 (May 1981), 165–214; and Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming*

- China (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 210–18.
88. Qian Yong, *Lüyuan conghua*, 24: 640–41. Tsao Jr-lien discusses the life-trajectory of Sun Chunyang in “Remembering Suzhou,” 119–20.
  89. Huang Xingzeng, “Record of Wu Customs” (*Wu feng hu*) in *Congshu jicheng chubian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1991), 156, no. 2 (3025). Translation modified from Tsao, “Remembering Suzhou,” 121. See also Li Xun, “Lun Mingdai Jiangnan diqu shidaifu shili de xingshuai,” *Ming Qing shi* 1 (1988): 30–38.
  90. Wang Qi (1465–1487), “Prosperity of Wu in Recent Years,” *Yupu zaji* 5: 42. Translation modified from Tsao, “Remembering Suzhou,” 61.
  91. Tsao, “Remembering Suzhou,” 133, 135. Zhang Dai may have been alluding to the “famous sites” paintings of Hangzhou when he complained of the pictures for sale at the pilgrims’ markets around West Lake, saying: “The scene was completely altered with the arrival of the motley crowds of pilgrims. The quiet elegance of the gentle people was no match for the gaudy showiness of the rustic folk; the subtle scent of orchids was no match for their pungent herbs; the string and wind instruments were no match for their loud drums and pipes; antique bronzes and fine porcelain were no match for their mud statues and bamboo toys; Sung and Yuan master-works were no match for their pictures of the Buddha and lake views.” Zhang, *Tao’an mengyi*, 1b, modified from translation by Wu Pei-yi, “An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T’ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century,” 84. For more on markets of this type, see Clunas, *Superfluous Things*, 136–37.
  92. For fan paintings of famous Suzhou sites painted by Zhang Hong in 1641, see *Emperor, Scholar, Artisan, Monk: The Creative Personality in Chinese Works of Art* (London: Sydney Moss Ltd., 1985), 46–53. Two particularly ingenious examples of this medium include a fan by Wen Congchang illustrating the famous sites of Suzhou, held in the Dubosc collection and discussed by Laing in “Wen Tien and Chin Chün-ming,” 412, fig. 3; and a fan illustrating eight scenic sites of Nanjing, four on each side, held in the Nanjing Municipal Museum. This *Eight Views of Jinling* (*Jinling bajing*) fan was painted by Jiang Qian, Zhou Tingce, Zhang Yuanju, Sun Zhi, and Zhou Shichen in ink and color on gold paper and measures 17.5 x 53.5 centimeters. It is reproduced in *ZGGDSHTM*, 6: 20–012.
  93. The set of hanging scrolls by Yuan Shangtong entitled *Landscapes after Ancient Masters* (*Fanggu shanshui*) and dated 1661 is done in ink and color on silk; each measures 232 x 52 centimeters. They are held in the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou and are reproduced in *ZGGDSHTM*, 11:3–04. I am grateful to Prof. Pan Gongkai, Prof. Cheng Baohong, and Ms. Wu Meili of the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, for allowing me to view these paintings.



## APPENDIX: CHINESE TEXTS

### Text A

龍昔僉臬鄧中，則我觀察大夫及臬李公寔渥然假之名焉，是以獲次及浙藩。當其時，大夫以才御史出齊戎政。政無逋闕而民不見驚。威聲泱泱稱，大風表朝野矣。顧獨不會時相意，不庸德賞，而從恆資守，外服湖州。其為湖先備勝災，災不害也最南服。龍時在告矣，耳之，則心欣焉。益神明羨之既而大夫遂增服。命專旄節。董文武吏士鎮綏我吳民。吳四郡禍水方新。民得大夫則如得歲焉。知無殲於溝塗矣。大夫既四郊視吊。且賑之再。畢，戒將士簡卒庀舟，為不虞備焉。曰：「民窮懸作，不可治也」。將士咸戰戰用命。於是乎海有戰艦。津塗有警艘卒。旬有蒐，月有閱。備既整且暇。而姦宄不作，海夷無敢窺吳境。又戒郡邑吏鳩工樹防為水備，曰：「水猶未弭，民又無食，寬之租而賈之力。功可濟也」。郡邑吏用命亦唯謹，民亦樂趨焉。際四郡衍隰，土無弗堤墳者，亦無弗時而告功。吳自是大水又三，歲荐三平堤矣，而三穫。自是墾田亦歲增，有濱于湖江而稼者。民謹然衢舞，且歌曰：

豐我癸庚，  
海波不興。  
足食足兵，  
我公政成。

今茲大夫以秩盈，移節參知兩浙之政事。民間里相顧感感，猶有衮衣悲也。乃從又歌曰：

公不我留，  
孰我噢咻？  
我思德猷，  
岳柱川流。

于是好事者相率圖境內勝山川十有六以獻旌，民所以不忘也，大夫士則又相率為詩焉，而以繹民思。龍于大夫最舊也，所獲私于大夫最又不可忘，又序繪圖分詠之。故如此云，萬曆癸未季冬之吉，賜進士第，朝列大夫，前浙江布政使司右參議，治下侍教生蔣夢龍頓首謹叙。

### Text B

石湖八月秋水平，丞相祠前月色明。  
遠山一帶橫翠黛，頃刻變幻烟霏生。  
吳宮越壘不可見，寂寞蒼苔鎖荒殿。  
弔古空傷麋鹿遊，高山徒切懷賢念。  
我公才挺豫章奇，謦諤風猷在赤墀。  
折衝已樹千城績，新命藩垣協帝咨。  
四牡欲行行且止，借寇無由情莫已。  
記得樓船湖上遊，峴山昔日差堪擬。  
顧九思敬賦。

**Text C**

自有声名達帝聰，古稱賢牧幾人同。  
褰帷四野曾隨雨，秉笏踰時即返風。  
心碎撫循遲奏最，力窮調劇不居功。  
欲徵赤子銜恩處，盡在攀轅一働中。  
小詩奉送禮亭明公以內艱還秦。  
部民文震孟。

**Text D**

戊寅秋日，寓毘陵莊氏之齋頭，漫題蘇臺十二葉。以消暑，愧不能似。

**Text E**

戊子春三月，寫于毘陵客舍。

**Text F**

吳王埋劍已千秋，尚有晴光夜壑浮。  
一自白公開徑，畫船簫鼓四時遊。

**Text G**

石湖煙水接長空，客棹漁舟西復東。  
閒倚行春回首處，上方臺殿翠微中。

## GLOSSARY

- Accumulated Snow on Mount  
Lingyan 靈巖積雪  
Beijing 北京  
Bian Wenyu 卞文瑜  
Cao Xuequan 曹學佺  
Chang Bridge 長橋  
Chang Gate 閘門  
Chen Guan 陳裸  
Chen Jiru 陳繼儒  
Chen Si 陳思  
Cui Yanfu 崔彥輔  
Dengwei 鄧尉  
*Departing at Daybreak at Jinchang*  
金閘曉發圖  
Dong Qichang 董其昌  
Dongting West Mountain 洞庭西山  
*Dongting xishan Fuyuansi tu* 洞庭西山福源寺圖  
Fan Chengda 范成大  
Fan Kuan 范寬  
Fan Yunlin 范允臨  
Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹  
*Fanggu shanshui* 仿古山水  
Feng Ting 馮停  
Ge Xu 葛旭  
Guangfu Pagoda 光福塔  
*Gusu shi jing* 姑蘇十景  
*Gusu si jing* 姑蘇四景  
hao 號  
hu 笏  
Huang Xingzeng 黃省曾  
Hubei 湖北  
Huiqing Monastery 慧慶僧寺  
Huizhou 徽州  
Hushan 虎山  
Hushan Bridge 虎山橋  
Huzhou 湖州  
ji 跡  
Jia Cong 賈琮  
Jiang Qian 蔣乾  
Jiangnan 江南  
Jiangsu 江蘇  
*Jiangzuo mingsheng tu* 江左名勝圖  
Jijian Monastery 寂鑒寺  
Jinchang 金閘  
Jing Hao 荊浩  
jing 景  
*Jinling bajing* 金陵八景  
Jizhou 冀州  
Kou Xun 寇恂  
Lake Tai 太湖  
Lengqie Monastery Pagoda 楞伽寺塔  
Li Jiquan 李及泉  
*Liangdong jiyong tu* 兩洞紀遊圖  
Lord Zhang Cave 張公洞  
Lu Shiren 陸士仁  
Lu Zhi 陸治  
Ming Xu 明旭  
mingsheng 名勝  
mingshan shengdi 名山勝地  
Mist and Rain over Stone Lake  
石湖烟雨  
Mount Jin 金山  
Mount Lingyan 靈巖山  
Mount Shangfang 上方山  
Mount Tianping 天平山  
Mount Zhixing 支硎山  
Nanjing 南京  
Night Moon over Tiger Hill 虎丘夜月  
Ningbo 寧波  
Panchi 盤螭  
Qian Gong 錢貢  
Qian Gu 錢穀  
*Qianshan yuanshui tu*  
千山遠水圖  
qing 情  
*Qingming shanghe tu* 清明上河圖  
Shao Mi 邵彌



Shen Hao 沈顥  
 Shen Zhou 沈周  
 Sheng'en Monastery 聖恩寺  
 Sheng Maoye 盛茂燁  
 Shuicheng tu 水程圖  
 Songjiang 松江  
 Stone Lake 石湖  
 Sun Zhi 孫枝  
 Sutai guji 蘇臺古蹟  
 Sutai shenglan tu 蘇臺勝覽圖  
 Sutai shier jing 蘇臺十二景  
 Suzhou Taishou Kou Shen quren tu 蘇州太守寇慎去任圖  
 Suzhou 蘇州  
 Taibaishan tu 太白山圖  
 Tang (family) 唐  
 Tang Renyu 唐人玉  
 Tang Xianke 唐猷可  
 Tang Yin 唐寅  
 Pond of Heaven 天池  
 Tiantong Monastery 天童寺  
 Tiger Hill 虎丘  
 Waicheng 外城  
 Wang Meng 王蒙  
 Wang Min 王珉  
 Wang Qujun 王璩峻  
 Wang Shizhen 王世貞  
 Wang Xun 王珣  
 Wei Shizhong 魏時中  
 Wen Boren 文伯仁  
 Wen Chongguang 文寵光  
 Wen Congchang 文從昌  
 Wen Congjian 文從簡  
 Wen Dian 文點  
 Wen Jia 文嘉  
 Wen Qianguang 文謙光  
 Wen Zhengming 文徵明  
 Wen Zhenheng 文震亨  
 Wen Zhenmeng 文震孟

Wu Ling 吳令  
 Wudu wencui xuji 吳都文粹續集  
 Wuzhong shenglan tu 吳中勝覽圖  
 Xi Shi Cave 西施洞  
 Xiang River 湘江  
 Xiangyang 襄陽  
 Xiao River 瀟水  
 Xu River 胥江  
 Xu Xiake 徐霞客  
 Yang Gu 羊祜  
 Yao Jun 姚俊  
 Yixing 宜興  
 Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道  
 Yuan Shangtong 袁尚統  
 Yunyan 雲巖  
 Zhang Fengyi 張鳳儀  
 Zhang Fu 張復  
 Zhang Hong 張宏  
 Zhang Tao 張滔  
 Zhang Yuanju 張元舉  
 Zhang Yuanshi 張元士  
 Zhang Zeduan 張擇端  
 Zhejiang 浙江  
 Zheng Hong 鄭弘  
 Zhidun 支遁  
 Zhou Shichen 周時臣  
 Zhou Tingce 周廷策  
 Zhu Zhi 朱質



## TRAVELS OF THE DAIHŌONJI SIX KANNON SCULPTURES

<sup>1</sup>  
Six Kannon inside the storehouse  
at Daihōonji, Kyoto. Photograph  
by Sawada Naoyuki.

### Abstract

The Kyoto temple Daihōonji, better known as Senbon Shakadō, houses a complete set of life-size wooden sculptures of Six Kannon made by the sculptor Jōkei in 1224. Many of the Six Kannon image sets have been scattered or destroyed over time, making this example all the more significant. The cult of the Six Kannon first appeared in Chinese literature in the sixth century, rose to popularity in Japan during the tenth, and flourished through the sixteenth century. Tracking the movements and changing religious functions of the Daihōonji Kannon sculptures provides an opportunity to consider how religious images “live” and how their circumstances change over time. In this investigation, three prominent themes related to the functions of the Six Kannon cult surface in reference to the Daihōonji images: the role of assisting beings in the six paths, associations with women, and relationships to texts.

BUDDHISTS AROUND THE WORLD celebrate the benefits of worshipping Kannon (Avalokiteśvara in Sanskrit), one of the most beloved deities in Buddhism. They believe that when the compassionate Kannon appears in multiple manifestations, the deity’s magnificent powers are increased to even greater heights. Cults of Kannon groups had important roles in Japanese history such as the cults of the Thirty-Three Kannon that became popular beginning in the sixteenth century and flourished through networks of pilgrimage routes.<sup>1</sup> The cult of the Six Kannon, however, rose to popularity much earlier. From numerous written records we know that this movement flourished during the tenth through the sixteenth centuries, but most of the image sets have been scattered or destroyed, leaving us with a fragmented impression. Although relatively unfamiliar to scholars, students, and tourists, the modest Kyoto temple of Daihōonji 大報恩寺, better known as Senbon Shakadō 千本釈迦堂, houses a complete set of superlative life-size wooden sculptures of Six Kannon from the thirteenth century, which serves as the strongest extant visual evidence for the cult (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup>

The Daihōonji images can be used as a case study to consider motivations for making and worshipping images of the Six Kannon. After consideration of the iconography of each image, we will examine how the concept of grouping Six Kannon was brought from China and came into favor in Japan. I will demonstrate that although there is no other complete extant set of the Six Kannon in sculpture made at the same time as the Daihōonji images, their creation was not an isolated phenomenon. With a working knowledge of how the cult of the Six Kannon came into being and developed, we can investigate how the functions of the Six Kannon images as a group changed over time.





2

2  
Main hall (Shakadō). 1227.  
Daihōonji, Kyoto.

### History of Daihōonji

Although there is a tendency to identify Buddhist icons with the specific place where they are housed, we find that they are not always fixed permanently in a single location and often travel—the Six Kannon of Daihōonji are documented examples of icon movement. I will examine clues of written, painted, sculptural, and architectural evidence to track these images and, by following their historical path as they moved from one location to another, will investigate the shifting functions of the Six Kannon cult more broadly. As Richard Davis has addressed with regard to Hindu images, it is important to overcome the temptation to limit inquiry only to the origins of images and expand it to a consideration of how they can move and gain new and layered functions.<sup>3</sup> Today the Daihōonji images are arranged along one wall inside a concrete storehouse that was built in 1984 to serve as a museum for Daihōonji's treasures, but for centuries the images had been enshrined in the main hall of the temple (Fig. 2).

Despite the fact that the Daihōonji main hall is the oldest surviving wooden building in Kyoto, it is still somewhat off the beaten track and relatively unfamiliar to most people. Senbon Street is one of the main thoroughfares running north-south on the west side of the city, and although the temple is close to this busy street, it is surrounded by homes in a densely packed neighborhood. In contrast, the photograph in figure 3, which was published in 1919, was taken before any traffic congestion or much neighborhood development.<sup>4</sup> While the formal name of this temple is Daihōonji, most people know it by its popular name “Senbon Shakadō,” which is taken from the location name and the main hall, or Shaka Hall, which enshrines an image of Śakyamuni Buddha (Shaka Nyorai 釈迦如来).<sup>5</sup> As an early reference, the well-known author and monk Yoshida Kenkō (吉田兼好 1282?–1350) describes going out at night to worship at the “Temple of Senbon” (Senbon no tera 千本の寺) in his *Essays in Idleness* (*Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草), which was composed sometime between 1330 and 1332.<sup>6</sup>

In *Hantōkō* 半陶藁 (Part ceramic and straw), compiled circa 1480s, which contains the earliest narrative on Daihōonji history, we are told that the Tendai prelate Gikū 義空 (grandson of Fujiwara no Hidehira 藤原秀衡 [d. 1187]) established



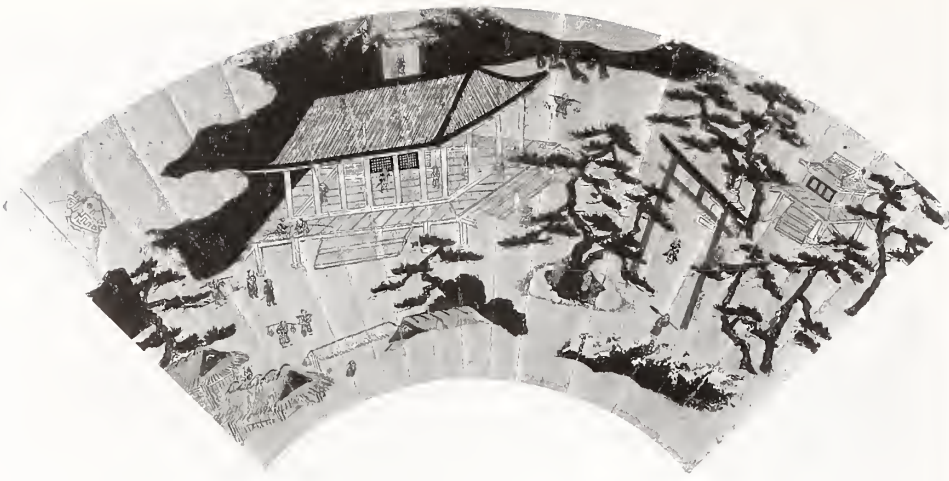
3

3  
Main hall, Daihōonji, Kyoto.  
Photograph ca. 1919. From Iwai,  
*Nihon kokenchiku seika*, 1:18.

Daihōonji in the Senbon area in Jōkyū 3 (1221). There he enshrined images of a Buddha and the Ten Great Disciples in a small temporary hall. In Jōō 2 (1223), Gikū commissioned the main hall, the completion of which was accomplished because of a donation received from a lumber merchant in Amagasaki (in Settsu province, modern Hyōgo prefecture), who had a miraculous dream that convinced him to donate wood for the hall.<sup>7</sup>

During the time of the 1951–54 restoration of the Daihōonji main hall, workers discovered an inscription on an interior ridge beam bearing the date of Antei 1 (1227) and Gikū's name, written as “Tendai Myōhokkeshū Shakushi Gikū” 天台妙法華宗釈氏義空 (Buddhist Gikū of the Tendai Lotus School). The inscription also states that there were images of Śakyamuni Buddha (Shaka), the Ten Great Disciples (J. Jūdai deshi 十大弟子), Maitreya (J. Miroku 弥勒), and Mañjuśrī (J. Monju 文殊) in the hall.<sup>8</sup> The whereabouts of the two latter images are no longer known, but the aforementioned Shaka must refer to the thirteenth-century image of Shaka made by the sculptor Gyōkai 行快 (fl. early 13TH century), which is considered the main image of Daihōonji.<sup>9</sup> Today the Shaka is kept in a closed tabernacle (J. *zushi* 厨子) inside the hall that is only opened a few times a year for special occasions. Unlike the Six Kannon, various records attest that the sculpture of Shaka was in the hall since the time it was built. The Ten Great Disciples, made by the famous sculptor Kaikei in the early thirteenth century, were also continuously enshrined in the hall until they were placed in a temple storehouse along with the Six Kannon in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

The temple belongs to the Shingon 真言 school today, but temple histories claim that in Katei 1 (1235), several years after its founding, Daihōonji was considered a divine site from which to spread the Buddhist faith of three schools: Kusha 俱舍, Tendai, and Shingon.<sup>11</sup> Although the founder Gikū was a Tendai monk, this statement indicates that the temple had broad sectarian interests. Edo period records claim that the temple had previously been Tendai, but when it became a subtemple of Chishakuin 智積院 in Genna 5 (1619) it officially registered as a Shingon school temple.<sup>12</sup>



4

4  
Fan painting of Kitano sutra hall.  
Ca. 1580s. Seal of Kanō Motohide  
(1551–1601). Color on paper, 50.5 x  
20.0 cm. Tokyo National Museum.

Inscriptions found inside two of the cavities of the Six Kannon icons provide a date equivalent to 1224, but no location for the images is given. A likely scenario is that the images were commissioned in 1223 at the same time as the Daihōonji main hall and were finished in 1224 when the objects inside them were installed, before the main hall was completed in 1227.<sup>13</sup> This way the images were ready to be enshrined at the celebration for the completion of the hall.<sup>14</sup> The main icon of Shaka was completed before the main hall, installed in a temporary hall in either 1220 or 1221, and then moved to the main hall when the building was completed.<sup>15</sup> Although they were not acknowledged as central icons in the known written histories of the building, evidence to support the theory that the Six Kannon were originally in the main hall is as follows: the date at which the Six Kannon were finished (1224) falls within the period of the main hall's commission and construction; like the hall, a Fujiwara patron sponsored the images; and there is a documented history supporting the images' presence in the proximity of Daihōonji. If indeed the Six Kannon had been in the hall originally, they may have been placed to one side of the hall and not included within the central altar arrangement.

Surprisingly, the earliest recorded location for the Six Kannon images is not at Daihōonji, but in a sutra hall that was built on the grounds of the nearby Kitano Shrine. The temple record *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi* 洛北千本大報恩寺縁起, or *Legend of Daihōonji in Senbon of North Kyoto*, which dates from around the mid-eighteenth century, is a key to tracking the movements of the Daihōonji Six Kannon.<sup>16</sup> Although the Six Kannon images are only briefly mentioned in this document, the record states that they were in the Kitano sutra hall. Since that hall was built in 1401 and therefore postdates the Six Kannon by almost two centuries, we must then consider why they would have been moved to this location.

*Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi* contains a section about the sutra hall, or Kyōōdō 経王堂, also called Kitano Ganjōjuji 北野願成就寺, referring to a building that previously stood south of Kitano Shrine, about a ten-minute walk from Daihōonji.<sup>17</sup> The building, no longer extant, was originally built by Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358–1408) because he was concerned about the spirit of the former Daimyo Yamana Ujikiyo 山名氏清 (1345–1392), who had opposed him when he attacked Kyoto in 1391 during the Meitoku uprising, also known as the Yamana rebellion. Ujikiyo died in battle in 1392 in the area of Uchino 内野, the





5

5  
Detail of sutra hall from the Uesugi  
screens. Painted ca. 1565. By Kanō  
Eitoku (1543–1590). Panel: 160.0  
x 364.0 cm. Uesugi Museum.  
Yonezawa city, Yamagata prefecture.  
Photograph courtesy of Matthew P.  
McKelway.

site of the former imperial palace, north of Kitano Shrine. According to *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi*, his head was taken and buried in Uchino. A year after his death, a service that included the reading of sutras and a large offering to the hungry ghosts (J. *daisegaki* 大施餓鬼) was held in Uchino with a thousand monks participating. A few years later in Ōei 8 (1401), Ashikaga Yoshimitsu had the sutra hall finished at Kitano where the service came to be held annually. *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi* explains that the Six Kannon sculptures were enshrined in this building.

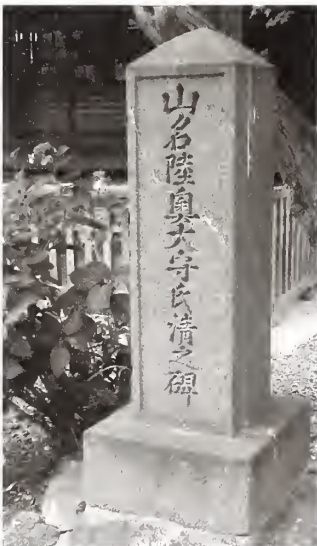
The relationship between the “Uchino sutra hall named Ganjōjuji” and Daihōonji is spelled out in a fourteenth-century record. *Daihōonji ryō shōen tahata nado mokuroku* 大報恩寺領庄園田畠等目録 (Inventory of Daihōonji’s possessions of landed estates, rice fields, etc.), dated Ōei 6 (1399) and written by the monk Fuson 芙尊, lists the sutra hall as one of Daihōonji’s twenty holdings.<sup>18</sup> Since the date 1399 given in this record predates the construction of the hall at Kitano in 1401, the record may refer to a temporary hall or the proposed site of the building before it was finished. After that time the sutra hall must have functioned as a possession under Daihōonji’s authority.

As the former sutra hall was a popular site to include in painted scenes of Kyoto, a sense of its appearance can be ascertained. None of the known paintings of the building show the images inside the hall, but the interior lattice doors are visible in a fan painting from the mid-Tenshō era (1573–1592) that bears a seal of Kanō Motohide 狩野元秀 (1551–1601) (Fig. 4). Perhaps these doors were meant to shield images enshrined behind them. Other paintings of Kyoto views, such as the famous Uesugi screens painted around 1565 by Kanō Eitoku 狩野永徳 (1543–1590), could not show the interior features of the hall because the hall was depicted as packed full of monks during the sutra-reading service that came to be known as the Manbukyōe 万部経会, which is a reading of “all parts” (*manbu*) of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Fig. 5). Even though we know from records that the former sutra hall was modified throughout history, one must question the accuracy of the works since the number of bays in the building differs from painting to painting.<sup>19</sup>

We can only speculate on the reasons why the older images of Six Kannon were brought into the sutra hall when it was built in 1401. In the quest to obtain icons, perhaps the managers of the sutra hall found that its nearby parent temple



6



7

6  
Sutra hall (Taishidō), Daihōonji,  
Kyoto. Built 1951–54 with wood  
from the earlier Kitano sutra hall.

7  
Marker dedicated to Yamana  
Ujikiyo (1345–1392). Stone, 1680.  
Daihōonji, Kyoto.

Daihōonji was willing to loan the Six Kannon images. Daihōonji may not have had a proper place to enshrine them and, as will be discussed later in the article, these images would have been considered efficacious to the mission of the sutra hall. With the great cost involved in hosting an annual sutra reading for a thousand monks, the hall may have turned to Daihōonji to borrow some ready-made icons to adorn it. Umezawa Akiko demonstrates that the number of monks participating in the Manbikyōe was tied to the finances and power of the Muromachi Shōgunate and that the service eventually became too much of a burden to support.<sup>20</sup> The sutra hall may have suffered the same fate.

According to the section on the sutra hall in *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi*, “After the Keichō era [1596–1615], in the Kanbun era [1661–1673] some sixty years ago, the great [sutra] hall...fell into ruin and images of the Six Kannon and a Jizō were moved to the Kondō [根堂 fundamental hall] of the main temple [本寺 honji]. The altar was moved to Chishakuin.”<sup>21</sup> The Kondō mentioned in *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi* must refer to the main hall of Daihōonji since it was the temple in charge of the sutra hall at the time. As Daihōonji had controlled the sutra hall since the fourteenth century, the property of the hall was ultimately transferred there.<sup>22</sup> Sculptures were not the only things to be moved, since some of the wood from the old sutra hall was also recycled into the Daihōonji main hall, which was undergoing repairs at the time.<sup>23</sup> When the sutra hall could no longer function and became dilapidated, Daihōonji had the responsibility of finding a new home for the Six Kannon images and chose to deposit them in their main hall by 1670.

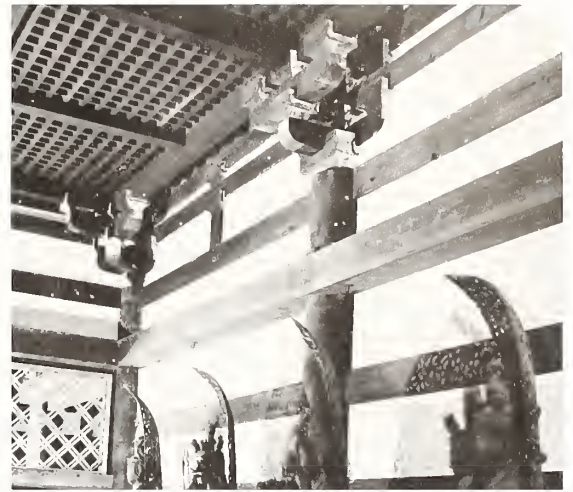
A new sutra hall that was built in 1951–54 now stands southwest of the main hall on the grounds of Daihōonji (Fig. 6). According to Ōmori Kenji, the new hall was constructed during the main hall’s restoration from a mixture of wood from the old sutra hall and wood from the additions made to the main hall during and after the Edo period.<sup>24</sup> The new sutra hall, which is seldom used and is usually closed to the public, now bears the name Taishidō 太子堂 in honor of Shōtoku Taishi (573–621) (also known as Prince Umayado), who as the putative promoter of Buddhism became the focus of a cult.<sup>25</sup> A stone marker dedicated to Yamana Ujikiyo,





8

Three of the Six Kannon inside Daihōonji main hall. Photograph taken before restoration, ca. 1951. From Kyotōfu, *Kokuhō*, 11, pl. 13.



9

Interior west wall of main hall. Daihōonji, Kyoto. The tops of four of the Six Kannon. Photograph ca. 1962. From Murata, "The Main Hall," part 1, 83.

which dates from 1680 (Enpō 5) and was moved from Kitano Shrine, stands in front of the new sutra hall.<sup>26</sup> This monument continues to memorialize the legacy of Ujikyo at Daihōonji (Fig. 7).

Inside the Daihōonji main hall, a series of four inscriptions on the *munafuda* 棟札, or ridge pole tablets, describe the repairs of the building and state that the Six Kannon were safely enshrined there beginning in 1670, and continuing in 1714, 1743, and 1897.<sup>27</sup> One photograph taken around 1951 shows them installed inside the hall, lined up inside cabinets, three on each side of the altar (Fig. 8).<sup>28</sup> When the building was restored in 1951–54, however, the restoration specialists removed the cabinets because they were not original to the hall and recycled them into the construction of the altar in the new sutra hall.<sup>29</sup> A photograph of the main hall published in a 1962 article shows the tops of four of the Six Kannon lined up along the inner west wall, without the cabinets (Fig. 9).<sup>30</sup> In 1963 the images traveled for an exhibition to Matsuzakaya Department Store in Nagoya before they were sent back to Daihōonji and deposited into a storehouse built in 1966.<sup>31</sup> Later they were moved again into a newer and safer storehouse that was built next door in 1984.<sup>32</sup>

### Introducing the Six Kannon

Repetition is a fundamental expression in Buddhist piety, whether through chanting, ritual, or image making. The idea of grouping multiple images of the same deity is very familiar in Japanese religion.<sup>33</sup> A well-known example is Kyoto's famous Sanjūsangendō (Hall of the thirty-three bays), with its one thousand images of Thousand-armed Kannon made in the twelfth to thirteenth century. The members of the Six Kannon, however, differ in that they each have individual features and roles that contribute to the power of the group. Using the statues from Daihōonji as models, I will briefly introduce the discrete types of Kannon and emphasize their distinctive features and roles within the Six Kannon scheme, before I consider the images as a singular entity. Aside from their identity as part of a group, the six types of Kannon are quite well known and are often enshrined individually at temples throughout Japan.





10

10  
Shō Kannon. By Jōkei, 1224.  
Wood, 178.0 cm. Daihōonji, Kyoto.  
Photograph by Sawada Naoyuki.



11

11  
Thousand-armed Kannon. By Jōkei,  
1224. Wood, 179.5 cm. Daihōonji,  
Kyoto. Photograph by Sawada  
Naoyuki.

### Shō Kannon

Shō Kannon (Ārya), or Sacred Kannon, is the plain, humanlike form without extra heads, eyes, or arms, that takes the generic form of a Bodhisattva modeled on the ideal of the Indian prince Siddhārtha before he left home and attained enlightenment to become Śakyamuni, the “Historical Buddha.” The image has a tall coiffure, a narrow diadem, a nude upper torso covered slightly with a scarf, and a lower body that is wearing a skirt (Fig. 10). The left hand holds a lotus bud, symbolizing purity and perfection since this flower arises out of the mud to bloom immaculately. The lotus is one of the most widely used symbols in Buddhism as well as the most common attribute for Kannon images. The right arm is raised with the thumb and second finger making a circle, in a variation of the “freedom from fear,” mudra. Shō Kannon does not always have this mudra. Instead, often the right arm is held down in the *varada* mudra (J. *yoganin* 予願印) of giving and charity.

Although there is evidence of slight color on the lips, hair, and eyes, all the Six Kannon sculptures from Daihōonji were left unpainted so that the natural state of the wood, which is *kaya* 榿 (*torreya nucifera*), or Japanese nutmeg, could be appreciated. This sculpture, like those in the entire group, was made in a style popular



12

12

Detail, Thousand-armed Kannon.  
By Jōkei, 1224. Wood, 179.5 cm.  
Daihōonji, Kyoto. Photograph by  
Sawada Naoyuki.

during the thirteenth century that borrowed features from Chinese images of the Song dynasty (960–1279), such as the extremely tall topknot, long fingernails, and elaborate drapery with folds carved in high relief. The high degree of realism in these works is further exemplified by the eyes, which are made of inserted crystal (J. *gyokugan* 玉眼) to give them an extra lifelike sparkle.

### Thousand-armed Kannon

With multiple appendages and eleven heads, the dramatic Thousand-armed Kannon (Sk. *Sahasrabhuja Avalokiteśvara*) (Fig. 11) seems to be the opposite of the more subdued Shō Kannon. The full number of one thousand arms is rarely depicted in images of this Kannon and as a convention for this deity, forty-two arms—two human-sized arms and forty smaller ones—were used for this image. The two principal arms form the mudra of prayer (J. *gasshōin* 合掌印, Sk. *anjali mudrā*) in front of the chest. Each of the forty arms is said to save beings in one of the twenty-five states of existence. Thus, the thousand arms are abbreviated to forty, as forty times twenty-five equals one thousand.<sup>34</sup> The hands hold numerous objects such as weapons, like the trident, bow, and arrow, to ward off the enemies of Buddhism; items related to healing such as grapes and a willow branch; and ritual objects such as a vajra, Buddhist rosary, and water vase.<sup>35</sup> The depiction of all these arms was a challenge for the artist who used a wide scarf to hide what could have been an awkward arachnid-like transition where the extra arms meet the body (Fig. 12). When worshiped as a single deity, the Thousand-armed Kannon helps to ward off illnesses and eye problems.

### Horse-headed Kannon

The manifestation of Kannon called Batō, or Horse-headed (Sk. *Hayagrīva*), takes its name from its most characteristic attribute—the horse head on top of its top-





13



15



14

knot. This image has three faces, each with angry scowls, fangs, and hair flying up in a flamelike fashion (Fig. 13). Horse-headed Kannon has a special hand gesture, which is literally called the “horse-mouth mudra” (J. *bakōin* 馬口印), with the pair of hands in front placed together and index fingers touching and pointing outward (Fig. 14).<sup>36</sup> The scowling face may seem a bit surprising for a Bodhisattva, but Horse-headed Kannon is sometimes considered a Myōō (Sk. Vidyārajā) or Bright King, a class of deity that expresses wrath against evil. Images of Horse-headed Kannon may have two, four, six, or eight arms, but this one has six, perhaps in keeping with the special significance of the number six for this group.<sup>37</sup> In accordance with his angry countenance, he carries weapons, including an ax, a jeweled sword, and a jeweled staff.

When Horse-headed Kannon is worshiped singly, the emphasis is on his role as the protector of animals, especially horses and cows. It is easy to imagine why the Japan Racing Association pays great homage to Horse-headed Kannon and even sponsored a special exhibition of sculptures and paintings of this deity in 1992.<sup>39</sup> In addition to controlling animals, Horse-headed Kannon also helps regulate the passions, which can be considered animal-like.





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13

Horse-headed Kannon. By Jōkei, 1224.  
Wood, 175.2 cm. Daihōonji, Kyoto.  
Photograph by Sawada Naoyuki.

14

Detail, Horse-headed Kannon. By  
Jōkei, 1224. Wood, 175.2 cm. Daihōonji,  
Kyoto. Photograph by Sawada  
Naoyuki.

15

Eleven-headed Kannon. By Jōkei, 1224.  
Wood, 181.6 cm. Daihōonji, Kyoto.  
Photograph by Sawada Naoyuki.

16

Detail, Eleven-headed Kannon. By  
Jōkei, 1224. Wood, 181.6 cm. Daihōonji,  
Kyoto. Photograph by Sawada  
Naoyuki.

### Eleven-headed Kannon

In accordance with the sutras regarding the appearance of the deity, this figure of Eleven-headed Kannon (J. Jūichimen, Sk. Ekadaśamukha Avalokiteśvara) has ten small heads, in addition to the main head (Fig. 15).<sup>40</sup> Seven of the small heads are arranged in a circle around the diadem, two are placed above the front row of heads, and one is placed on top of the large topknot of hair (Fig. 16). The head at the very back of the main head is a laughing face with an open mouth, and the head of Amida Buddha is balanced on top of the main head above the large topknot. Early sources for descriptions of the deity are found in sutras that were translated into Chinese by the sixth century. As in many images of Eleven-headed Kannon and according to *Ekadaśamukha dhāraṇī sūtra* (J. Jūichimen kanzeon bosatsu jin-jukyō; C. *Shiyimian Guanshiyin pusa shenzhou jing*; 十一面觀世音菩薩神呪經), the Daihōonji image has three Bodhisattva heads with kind expressions, three heads with angry faces, three heads with tusks, one laughing face in the back, and a Buddha head at the top.<sup>41</sup> Including the main head, the eleven heads are believed to help dispel delusions and aid sentient beings on the path to enlightenment.

As is appropriate for an image of Kannon, the left hand holds a vase containing a lotus. The right hand is held down in the *varada* mudra of giving and charity. This deity was extremely popular as a single image of Kannon, especially during the ninth and tenth centuries.



17

17

Juntei Kannon. By Jōkei, 1224.  
Wood, 175.6 cm. Daihōonji, Kyoto.  
Photograph by Sawada Naoyuki.

### Juntei Kannon

Juntei (Sk. Cundī) is known as the Buddha-mother Kannon and of the Six Kannon is the least likely to appear alone (Fig. 17). Sutras that describe her, such as *Cundī dhārāṇī sūtra*, were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the eighth century.<sup>42</sup> Believers often specifically address prayers to Juntei Kannon in search of wisdom, victory in battle, cures for illnesses, easy childbirth, long life, and prayers for rain.<sup>43</sup> Also known as “Mother of the Seventy Million Buddhas” (Sk. Saptakoṭibuddhamātṛ; J. Shichikutei Butsumo 七俱胝仏母), this image has eighteen arms that hold various items to help with the salvation of sentient beings.<sup>44</sup> Representations of Juntei vary, but some of the attributes include a vajra, a wheel, a lotus, and a conch shell.

The Shingon and Tendai schools were two major schools of Japanese Buddhism that supported the Six Kannon cult in Japan during the tenth through the fifteenth centuries. Tendai and Shingon often employ the same deities for rituals, but in the case of the Six Kannon, we find variations in the group. The fact that



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Fukūkenjaku Kannon (center image).  
Eighth century. Dry lacquer, 362.1 cm.  
Sangatsudō, Tōdaiji, Nara. Photograph  
by Nagano Rokumeisō.

Juntei is included in the Daihōonji group of Six Kannon demonstrates that this particular set is for Shingon school use.<sup>45</sup> In Tendai school configurations of the Six Kannon grouping, Juntei is exchanged with Fukūkenjaku Kannon, or the Rope-snaring (Sk. Amoghapāśa) Kannon, to aid those in the human path.<sup>46</sup> Literally the name means “Kannon whose lasso is never empty,” and this Kannon is worshiped because of his compassionate vow to save all beings with his unfailing lasso. The most well-known image of Fukūkenjaku Kannon is the eighth-century example from the Sangatsudō 三月堂 at Tōdaiji 東大寺 in Nara, which is not in a set of Six Kannon (Fig. 18). Texts and extant image groups demonstrate that the Tendai and Shingon schools selected different deities for the Six Kannon assembly.<sup>47</sup>

Returning to the Daihōonji Juntei image, we can see that with its round face, full cheeks, and body it has a more massive appearance than the others. The extra flourishes of hair wound around the diadem and the very large bow tied in front of the skirt also differ from the other images in the group. Another distinguishing feature of this sculpture is an inscription in ink hidden in the interior cavity: “This Juntei Kannon was made by the artist Higo Jōkei of *bettō* [supervisor] rank, Jōō 3 [1224], fifth month, twenty-second day.”<sup>48</sup>

此准提觀音者  
造仏師肥後別当定慶  
貞応参年五月二二日

Even with some differences in appearance, because of the numerous shared formal similarities between each of the images of the Daihōonji Kannon, the information in the inscription likely applies to the entire set. Even if Higo Jōkei 肥後定慶 (b. 1184) made only the Juntei image, the other statues were certainly made under his supervision, as his status as workshop supervisor (*bettō*) indicates.<sup>49</sup> Jōkei was a member of the well-respected Kei school of sculptors, but few details are known about him, which is complicated by the fact that there is another sculptor named Jōkei who used the same characters for his name. Since he refers to himself by adding the name of the location Higo in Kyūshū, we can distinguish him from the Jōkei who made images for the East Golden Hall (Tōkondō 東金堂) at Kōfukuji during the thirteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Aside from the Six Kannon, there are at least eight other works considered to be by Higo Jōkei. Among them the image of Bishamonten 毘沙門天 (Sk. Vaiśravaṇa) (1224), now owned by Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku (Tokyo University of the Arts), and the Shō Kannon (1226), from Kuramadera 鞍馬寺 in Kyoto, are the closest in date to those from Daihōonji. The Kuramadera Shō Kannon was made in the same elegant Song style as the Daihōonji images, but unlike them it was once painted with elaborate colors.<sup>51</sup>





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19  
Nyoirin Kannon. By Jōkei. 1224.  
Wood, 96.5 cm. Daihōonji, Kyoto.  
Photograph by Sawada Naoyuki.



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20  
Detail, Nyoirin Kannon. By Jōkei,  
1224. Wood, 96.5 cm. Daihōonji,  
Kyoto. Photograph by Sawada  
Naoyuki.

All Jōkei's sculptures were made in a technique using multiple blocks of wood in which interior cavities were created. In the Daihōonji Kannon, these spaces were not only suitable for inscriptions, but were also used to contain precious deposits, such as the texts of sutras and *dhāraṇī*, which were placed inside them. I will return later to the significance of the objects contained inside the Daihōonji images.

### Nyoirin Kannon

Among the images in the Daihōonji set, this six-armed sculpture of Nyoirin Kannon (Sk. Cintāmaṇi Avalokiteśvara) is the only one of the six that is seated (Fig. 19). The rock base represents Mount Potalaka, which is the paradise where Kannon resides. Although images of this deity have additional attributes, the name Nyoirin is derived from the wish-granting jewel, or *nyoi* 如意, and the wheel, or *rin* 輪, of dharma that it holds. In English this deity may be referred to as Wish-granting or Jewel-holding Kannon (Fig. 20). The earliest esoteric text that outlines

the iconography for the form of this deity with six arms is the “Service for meditation on Nyoirin Kannon who observes freely” (J. *Kanjizai Nyoirin Kannon bosatsu yuga hōyō*; C. *Guanzizai Ruyilun Guanyin pusa yujia fayao*; 觀自在如意輪觀音菩薩瑜伽法要), reportedly translated into Chinese by the eighth-century Indian monk Vajrabodhi, who is said to be the fifth patriarch in the Shingon tradition.

The first hand is in the contemplating position because it shows mercy to sentient beings; the second hand holds the jewel that grants all desires; and the third hand holds a rosary to save animals from suffering. On the left, the first hand rests on Mount Potalaka, unwavering in its fulfillment; the second holds a lotus, purifying unlawfulness; and the third grasps the wheel that turns the supreme law.<sup>52</sup>

Since each arm helps beings in one of the six paths, the fact that Nyoirin is included in the Six Kannon group multiplies these benefits.

### Formation of the Six Kannon Cult in China

Kannon is the Bodhisattva of compassion whose image first appeared in India, but to find the roots of the Six Kannon cult we must rely on an investigation of Buddhist literature, not in India, but in China. The sixth century Chinese text *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great calming and contemplation) (J. *Makashikan*) written by Zhiyi (538–597) has one of the earliest specific descriptions of six types of Kannon (C. Guanyin) (Sk. Avalokiteśvara).<sup>53</sup> Since this is one of the major texts used by the school of Tiantai Buddhism, or Tendai in Japanese, its significance throughout history must not be underestimated. In the section dedicated to the Six Guanyin in *Mohe zhiguan*, which is translated below, the focus is on the power to eliminate hindrances to good karma.

The *dhāraṇīs* of six-syllable phrases 六字章句陀羅尼 [J. *rokuji shōku darani*, C. *liuzi zhangju tuoluoni*] have the power to destroy the obstacles of passionate afflictions; without a doubt they purify [the senses of] the three poisons [of greed, anger, and delusion], and consummate the path of Buddhahood. The “six syllables” refer to the six [incarnations of] Avalokiteśvara, who have the power to destroy the three kinds of obstacles in the six [lower] destinies.

1. Avalokiteśvara as Great Compassion 大悲觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of hell. The suffering in this destiny is intense — therefore it is appropriate to apply great compassion.

2. Avalokiteśvara as Great Mercy 大慈觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of hungry ghosts. This destiny entails starvation and thirst—therefore it is appropriate to apply great mercy.
3. The Fearless Lion-like Avalokiteśvara 師子無畏觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of beasts. The king of beasts is majestic and fierce [and can thus face the untamed ferociousness of beasts]—therefore it is appropriate to apply great fearlessness.
4. Avalokiteśvara of the Universally Shining Great Light 大光普觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of the asuras. This destiny entails envy and distrust—therefore it is appropriate to apply universal illumination.
5. Avalokiteśvara as the Divine Hero 天人丈夫觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of human beings. The human destiny involves both mundane affairs 事 and [the capacity to understand] the principle [of reality] 理. He is called “divine” because he uses mundane means to overcome [human] arrogance, and he is called a “hero” in [that he helps human beings understand] the principle [of reality], i.e., to perceive Buddha-nature 佛性.
6. Avalokiteśvara as Mahābrahmā the Profound 大梵深遠觀世音 destroys the three obstacles in the destiny of divine beings. Brahmā is the lord of divine beings—by indicating the lord, one includes the vassals as well.<sup>54</sup>

According to this text, the Six Guanyin are viewed as manifestations of a special Six-syllable phrase of *dhāraṇī*. These powerful mystic formulas are distillations of esoteric texts that have apotropaic power.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps the association with the Guanyin gave the concept of *dhāraṇī* a more accessible presence than just that of imagining the power of a text. In *Mohe zhiguan* each of the Six Guanyin helps to save beings in one of the six paths of existence: hell, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, and heavenly beings. The three obstacles that each Avalokiteśvara destroys refer to passionate afflictions, karma, and retribution.<sup>56</sup> A tenth-century handscroll from Dunhuang, now in the Stein Collection at the British Museum, gives a clear illustration of the six paths (fig. 21). According to Chinese Buddhist belief, after someone dies he or she is confronted by each of the Ten Kings (at intervals spaced out over a three-year period) who assesses a list of the person's good and bad deeds during life to determine the next incarnation. Although there is no Guanyin to intercede in this painting, the deceased stands before one of the Ten Kings confronted with the six possibilities for the next incarnation represented on each of the black clouds.<sup>57</sup> The anxiety of this terrifying determination must have fueled enthusiasm for the Six Kannon to intercede on behalf of the dead.





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21  
Illustration of the six realms in the Ten Kings Sūtra. From Cave 17, Dunhuang, China. Tenth century. Paper, h. 27.8 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Although I have not yet been able to find any exact images of the Six Guanyin in China, there are some fascinating textual sources. Centuries after the sixth century *Mohe zhiguan*, stories such as those in the eleventh-century Chinese text, *Sanbao ganying yaolielu* 三寶感應要略錄 (Essential record of the efficacy of the three jewels) illustrate the practical benefits of making images of the Six Guanyin. Chapter 29 of the text tells the story of a man named Wenshi 文侍 who was worried about his deceased parents because they had not followed the Buddhist way; he believed they were lost somewhere in the six paths. He decided to have paintings of Six Guanyin made in order to help rescue his parents. The night before the paintings were to be finished, the Six Guanyin came to him in a dream to tell him his parents had been saved. One of the Guanyin had located his father in hell, and another had found his mother in the hungry ghost path. The other four Guanyin assured him that if his parents had been in the other four paths, they would have been rescued from those places as well. He awoke to find that the paintings had been finished and were emitting a divine light. Later, two heroes riding a purple cloud appeared and told him Guanyin had rescued them. All who heard the story believed the two heroes were his parents who had come to let him know they had been saved.<sup>58</sup>

Although not as explicit as chapter 29, chapter 28 provides another story about the efficacy of making paintings of the Six Guanyin. A man named Xuqu 徐曲 from Liangzhou mourned his parents when he was young. Because he was worried about their fate, he made paintings of the Thousand-eyed, Thousand-armed Guanyin and the Six Guanyin for a memorial at his former home. A year and a half passed and he still did not know their fate. The next year, the voices of Xuqu's parents called to him out of the sky and told him that because of their bad karma they had been sent to suffer in the hells. But because he had the paintings made, they had the opportunity to leave hell and go to heaven. Xuqu told them he did not believe them, so they said if he looked in a yellow box that was in storage he would receive one hundred gold coins. The next day when he found the coins, he realized what they said was true. The narrator of the story adds that when viewing these paintings their elegance matches the story.<sup>59</sup>

These two stories are not only valuable because they substantiate that images of the Six Guanyin were made in China and considered efficacious, but also because they illustrate the significant role of the Six Kannon in saving beings trapped in the worst of the six paths. In my search I have yet to confirm any extant pictorial or sculptural images of the Chinese Six Kannon (Guanyin), but I hope to find them in the future.

### Transition to Japan

As shown in the table below, although the characters for the names of the Six Guanyin in China differ from the Japanese sources on the Six Kannon, the message is the same. In the eleventh century, the esteemed Japanese Shingon prelate Ono Ningai 小野仁海 (951–1046) explained the equivalencies between the traditional Chinese list from *Mohe zhiguan* and the images found in Japan, as well as which Kannon helps which path.<sup>60</sup> Although the original source for the text called *Ningai chūshinmon* 仁海注進文 (Notes by Ningai) is unknown, it was subsequently quoted in later Buddhist texts. The earliest is *Sanmairyū kudenshū* 三昧流口伝集 (Collection of the oral transmissions of Sanmai), which was compiled in 1069–72, and other texts include *Hishō mondō* 秘鈔問答 (Selections of secret questions and answers) by the monk Raiyu 頼瑜 (1226–1304) and the Tendai ritual manual *Asabashō* 阿婆縛鈔 from 1252.<sup>61</sup>

The fact that the earliest citation of *Ningai chūshinmon* was included in *Sanmairyū kudenshū*, a compilation made not too long after Ningai's death, and that the later quotations remain relatively consistent, gives the text more credibility. Furthermore, its repeated citation demonstrates a prolonged interest in the Chinese origins of the Six Kannon as well as explanations for how they functioned. Ono Ningai's eleventh century *Ningai chūshinmon* is quoted in *Sanmairyū kudenshū* as follows:

#### Notes on the Six Kannon

1. Avalokiteśvara as Great Mercy 大慈 changes to Shō Kannon and saves those in the hell path. He has a light blue body. The left hand holds a blue lotus. Other examples have a [plain] lotus. The right hand makes the “freedom from fear” [J. *semuiin* 施無畏印, Sk. *abhaya mudrā*] gesture.
2. Avalokiteśvara as Great Compassion 大悲 changes to Thousand-armed Kannon and saves those in the hungry ghost path. He has a yellow-gold body and six heads. The left hand holds a red lotus. The right makes the “freedom from fear” gesture.
3. The Fearless Lionlike Avalokiteśvara changes to the Horse-headed Kannon and saves those in the animal path. His body is blue. The right hand

TABLE COMPARING CHINESE GUANYIN AND JAPANESE KANNON

Six Guanyin (Chinese) in <i>Mohe zhiguan</i> 摩訶止觀 (sixth century)	Six Kannon (Japanese) according to Ono Ningai 小野仁海 (951–1046)	Role in Six Paths
1. 大悲 Dabei (Great Compassion)	聖 Shō (Sacred) (Sk. Ārya)	Saves hell denizens
2. 大慈 Daci (Great Mercy)	千手 Senju (Thousand-armed) (Sk. Sahasrabhuja)	Saves hungry ghosts
3. 師子無畏 Shizi wuwei (Fearless Lion)	馬頭 Batō (Horse-headed) (Sk. Hayagrīva)	Saves animals
4. 大光普照 Dagan puzhao (Universal Light)	十一面 Jūichimen (Eleven-headed) (Sk. Ekadaśamukha)	Saves asuras (demigods)
5. 天人丈夫 Tianren zhangfu (Divine Hero)	准提 Juntei (Buddha-mother) (Sk. Cundī) [Note: 不空羂索 Fukūkenjaku (Rope-snaring) (Sk. Amoghapāśa) is in this position in the Tendai tradition]	Saves humans
6. 大梵深遠 Dafan shenyuan (Omnipotent Brahmā)	如意輪 Nyoirin (Jewel-holding) (Sk. Cintamaṇi)	Saves heavenly beings

- holds a lotus, and on top of the lotus is a sutra box. The left hand makes the “freedom from fear” gesture.
4. Avalokiteśvara of the Universally Shining Great Light changes to Eleven-headed Kannon and saves those in the asura path. His body is the color of [human] flesh. The right hand holds a red lotus, and on top of the flower stands a vase with a single-prong vajra emerging out of its mouth. The left hand makes the “freedom from fear” gesture.
  5. Avalokiteśvara as the Divine Hero changes to Juntei Butsumo Kannon and saves humans. The body is dark blue. The right hand holds a blue lotus. The left hand makes the “freedom from fear” gesture.
  6. Avalokiteśvara as Mahābrahmā changes to Nyoirin Kannon and saves those in the heavenly path. He has a white body. The left hand holds a red lotus, and on top of the flower stands a three-pronged vajra. The right hand makes the “freedom from fear” gesture.<sup>62</sup>



Ningai states that the preceding Six Kannon names and different transformations come from the sixth-century text *Mohe zhiguan*. However, he reversed the two positions of Dabei (Great Compassion) and Daci (Great Mercy) in his explanation; according to Ningai, Daci equals Shō, saving those in hell, and Dabei equals Senju, saving those in the hungry ghost path. While Ningai's acknowledgment of *Mohe zhiguan* as the source may have been an attempt to give a group of images appearing in Japan around the tenth century a much more established pedigree, he explained that the additional description of the colors of the images and the objects they hold was taken from the notes of an "earlier master" whom he does not name.

Perhaps the "earlier master's" description may be closer to the appearance of the Chinese Six Guanyin, but without visual confirmation, this cannot be proved. Since each image described in the text has just two arms and only the Thousand-armed Kannon has extra heads, these are not the familiar esoteric images of the Six Kannon like those at Daihōonji. On the other hand, paintings of the Rokujikyōhō mandara 六字經法曼荼羅 (Mandala for the six-syllable ritual) contain images of the Six Kannon that closely match Ningai's description.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps because by the eleventh century individual types of images of the Six Kannon had already been formed as the subjects of independent cults, sculpture groups with broader functions than the Six-syllable sutra ritual were assembled using the more familiar esoteric images of the Kannon rather than the descriptions from Ningai's text.

### Functions of the Set: Six Kannon for Six Paths

Using the Daihōonji set as models to investigate the cult of the Six Kannon, three significant themes related to the functions of these images emerge. First of all, as described in Chinese records, and later explained by Ningai and others in Japan, the most well-known function for the Six Kannon was to help beings navigate the six paths. Just as the eleventh-century Chinese record, *Sanbao ganying yaoliuleu*, recounted the story of a dedicated son trying to locate and save his parents who had not followed Buddhist principles, we can surmise that the Six Kannon from Daihōonji also served to help save those thought to be lost in the six paths. The inscription mentioned earlier that was found on the postscript of the sutra inside the Horse-headed Kannon image states:

Jōō 3 [1224], fourth month, twenty-ninth day, the patron Fujiwara Mochihisa's daughter, of the great Fujiwara patrons, offered these sutras placed inside the Six Kannon [images] that she had constructed and set up. These are for the benefit of various sentient beings in the dharma worlds to be led with excellence to the highest form of enlightenment. I write this expressing her whole-hearted sincerity.

Written by the monk Myōzō.

貞応三年四月廿九日大檀那  
藤原以久女大施主藤  
氏六観音造立之中  
奉納此經為利法界之  
郡類導無上菩提抽  
殊丹誠所書写如件  
執筆僧明増

Although the inscription does not say “six paths” explicitly, it may be implied from the phrase about guiding various sentient beings in the dharma paths to supreme enlightenment. While this inscription is rather general about who will benefit from the Six Kannon, the role of the Daihōonji images seems to have shifted to a more specific purpose in the fifteenth century when they were moved to the sutra hall. There the role of the Six Kannon was likely to ease the suffering of Ujikiyo and the spirits of the other war victims to prevent them from becoming vengeful ghosts. While the Kannon could save beings trapped in the six paths, they could also protect the living from malevolent spirits and possibly ease the consciences of those who felt responsible for their deaths. Since the sutra hall was next to Kitano Shrine, it should bring to mind that this shrine was constructed to honor Sugawara Michizane (845–903), who had been exiled from Kyoto for a suspected plot to dethrone the emperor. Twenty years after Michizane’s death, his reputation was restored and the shrine was dedicated to him in order to appease his spirit.

In Ujikiyo’s case, *Meitokuki* 明徳期 (Record of the Meitoku era [1390–94]; compiled c. 1396, published 1632) reports that a large service (the previously mentioned *daisegaki*) with a thousand monks was held so that Ujikiyo — who formerly controlled Mutsu 陸奥 — as well as those who died in the war, the sentient beings of the six paths, the three worlds, and the 10,000 souls 霊 would all be able to attain salvation.<sup>64</sup> This service was first performed in a temporary hall (in Uchino), but the sutra hall was built at Kitano Shrine nine years later to take over this function. Referring back to the statement in *Meitokuki*, although it is meant to focus upon Ujikiyo, it also emphasizes helping those in the six paths as a goal for the service. Once the Six Kannon images were installed in the sutra hall, they could join in the effort to save Ujikiyo and other unfortunate beings.

Textual evidence for the role that other Six Kannon image sets played in aiding those trapped in the six paths is plentiful. In Japan the first recorded instance of the construction of Six Kannon images is from Engi 10 (910) when the Tendai

priest Sōō 相応 (831–918) had images of Amida (Sk. Amitābha) and the Six Kannon made in order to lead the living beings of the six paths to salvation.<sup>65</sup>

*A Tale of Flowering Fortunes* (*Eiga monogatari* 栄華物語), from the late eleventh century (circa 1092), describes the function of the Six Kannon images that were enshrined in the Medicine Buddha Hall, or Yakushidō, built by Fujiwara Michinaga 藤原道長 (966–1027) in 1023 at Hōjōji 法成寺 from a lay perspective rather than a Buddhist text. The author reports that, “The purpose of the Six Kannon is to benefit all creatures in the six paths.” Following this passage is an abbreviated list of which Kannon takes care of which path and the Chinese counterparts similar to Ono Ningai’s *Chūshinmon* from the early eleventh century. The section also continues: “It is comforting to realize that we will never be subject to transmigration in the six paths if we worship with those names [of Kannon] constantly in mind.”<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, the images described were all lost when a fire burned Hōjōji in 1058, so although it is possible that these images actually fit Ningai’s description of two-armed images of Six Kannon mentioned earlier, there is no longer any physical evidence. Even without the confirmation of their appearance, the role of each Kannon to assist in a specific path is clearly stated.

### Salvation for Women

When examining the records of the Daihōonji images and the literature about other sets, it becomes apparent at the outset that the Six Kannon cult was of particular interest to women and must have targeted their salvation as well as worldly benefit. A woman made the initial donation for the Daihōonji set. Fujiwara Mochihisa’s 藤原以久 daughter was the main patron of the Six Kannon images as stated on an inscription inside the Horse-headed Kannon image, and reiterated on a text inside the Nyoirin image as follows:

This [text] was copied in Jōō 3 [1224], fourth month, twenty-fifth day, for the patron, the former provincial governor of Higo Fujiwara Mochihisa’s daughter, of the great Fujiwara patrons.

Written by Myōzō.<sup>67</sup>

貞応三年四月廿五日書写 願主  
肥後前司藤原以久女大施主藤氏執筆明増

I have not located information about her, but her father Mochihisa was the son of the military leader Fujiwara Tokinaga 藤原以利 and the nephew of Saitō Tokiyori 斎藤時頼. In 1221, Mochihisa was in temporary control of the area of Higo,



which was part of present-day Kumamoto prefecture in Kyūshū.<sup>68</sup> This fact likely explains why the sculptor Higo Jōkei, who was named after the Higo area, was commissioned to make the sculptures.

When the Daihōonji main hall was restored in the 1950s, an inscription discovered on one of the original ceiling beams was found to bear the names of at least fifteen women, six of whom were nuns. While the inscription is worn, some of the names are unclear, and the purpose is not stated, the names are very significant in that they likely refer to some of the original patrons of the hall. Among the names of the women are daughters of the Ki 紀, Minamoto 源, and Fujiwara families.<sup>69</sup> Was one of the two Fujiwara daughters 藤原氏女 in the inscription the same person who donated the Six Kannon? There is no way to determine this, but the apparent interest by Fujiwara women, as well as by other women, in the construction of the Daihōonji main hall is at least another clue that strengthens the possibility that the Six Kannon sculptures were originally in the main hall.

To consider reasons why Mochihisa's daughter may have chosen to make the donation of the Six Kannon images, or at least had them selected for her, there are several literary clues that reveal interest by women in the Six Kannon cult during the tenth through fifteenth centuries. For example, in Eikan 3 (985), Empress Shōshi (950–1000) sponsored the making of Six Kannon images for a temple complex named Kannon'in at the foot of Mount Hiei. "The Lecture Hall (*kōdō*) enshrines gold-colored images of the Six Kannon that lead sentient beings in the six paths and there are images of six devas that protect the Buddhist law."<sup>70</sup> The buildings of Kannon'in, like the fate of most old structures on Mount Hiei, were lost but at least the images are known through records. As another source related to women, *The Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi* 枕草子), written during the late tenth to early eleventh century by the well-known female author Sei Shōnagon, prominently lists the Six Kannon. *The Pillow Book* contains many lists, but only this account is of Buddhist deities: "Buddhas: Nyoirin, Thousand-armed, and all the other Six Kannon, Yakushi Buddha, Shaka Buddha, Miroku, Jizō, Monju, honorable Fudō, and Fugen."<sup>71</sup> Since she topped the list she titled as "Buddhas" (*hotoke wa* 仏は) with two specific types of Kannon and subsequently acknowledged them as members of the Six Kannon, she pointed toward the widespread notion of the Six Kannon cult as well as its appeal to women at the time.

More specifically related to women's interests, it is clear from historical records that Six Kannon images were sponsored for aid in childbirth, which is of course of special concern to women. *The Tale of Heike*, a story of twelfth-century events that was compiled in the thirteenth century, provides an important reference in the section on auspicious childbirth. The chapter describes how rituals of the Six Kannon and some other Buddhist deities were performed for the imperial con-



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*Dhāraṇī* sutra attached inside the head cavity of Juntei Kannon. Daihōonji, Kyoto. From Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi*, plate vol., 217, 99–76.

sort, but when the sutra of the Thousand-armed Kannon was read, the prince was finally born.<sup>72</sup>

Although of a later date than the Daihōonji images, I have discovered two different records from the fifteenth century that describe elaborate rituals dedicated to Six Kannon (called *Roku Kannon gōgyōki* 六観音合行記). Each text explains how the ritual was carried out, how the altar was arranged, where the paintings of the Six Kannon were placed, and which monks participated and what they chanted. Just as in the Daihōonji set, one of these records names a woman as the main patron, and the other identifies its three patrons as a mother, father, and son.<sup>73</sup> For all the detail in both these records, the goals for the services are not clearly stated, but the likely target was to help women and those close to them.

### Text Connections

Beyond the roles of aiding women and restless spirits in the six paths, the Six Kannon group had a close relationship to Buddhist texts. As mentioned earlier, sacred texts were placed inside the cavities of each one of these sculptures at the time of their construction. Buddhist images of the thirteenth century often had items installed inside them, but the relationships between the type of image and its contents are often not as closely linked as they are in the Daihōonji images.<sup>74</sup>

A detailed survey carried out in 1990 that recorded the contents of each image revealed that the texts are specifically related to the particular Kannon statue that contains them.<sup>75</sup> For example, figure 22 shows the scroll of a *dhāraṇī* sutra for this particular deity that was attached inside the cavity of the body of the corresponding image of Juntei Kannon.<sup>76</sup> Two to three Buddhist texts, many of which are *dhāraṇī* sutras that are directly related to their specific Kannon host, were installed inside each one of the Daihōonji images. If we recall the explanation in *Mohe zhiguan*, the Six Guanyin (Six Kannon) have an intimate relationship to text because they were considered manifestations of the Six-syllable *dhāraṇī*, which has the power to destroy the obstacles of good karma. Since the Daihōonji images physically contain *dhāraṇī*, vestiges of the concept of them as *dhāraṇī* may have carried over into their later relationships to text in Japan.<sup>77</sup>

During the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, when the Six Kannon set was enshrined at the sutra hall, the group likely performed another function: namely, to protect the dharma in a broad sense. By 1670 this building had fallen into disrepair, and the Six Kannon had been moved to the Daihōonji main hall. The sutra hall was later rebuilt and perhaps those who were in charge of the hall wanted a change of icons and selected a different set of images with a stronger dharma-protecting role to replace the old Six Kannon group.<sup>78</sup> The late eighteenth century gazetteer *Miyako meisho zue* 都名所図絵 (Famous views of the capital)





One panel from sutra container with incised Six Kannon showing Juntei (or Fukūenjaku) and Horse-headed Kannon. 1141. Bronze, 21.4 x 18.8 cm. Chōanji, Ōita prefecture. Line drawings show the images on this panel. From Kyūshū Rekishi Shiryōkan, *Bungo Kunisaki*, 15, figs. 39–40.

from An'ei 9 (1780) states that the main images for the sutra hall at that time were the two Buddhas Śakyamuni and Prabūtaratna (J. Tahō 多宝).<sup>79</sup> The very presence of these two deities together signifies the *Lotus Sūtra* since they vowed to appear whenever this sutra is preached. Itō Shirō proposed that two fifteenth-century Buddha images that closely resemble each other and are owned by Daihōonji are the former main images for the sutra hall.<sup>80</sup> This rebuilt sutra hall remained on the grounds of Kitano Shrine until it became defunct in 1870. At this time the laws enacted to separate Buddhist temples from Shinto shrines must have forced Kitano Shrine to send the property of the sutra hall to Daihōonji.<sup>81</sup>

The sutra hall's precious entire cannon of sutras (*issaikyō* 一切經) made in 1412 (Ōei 19) was also sent to Daihōonji around 1870.<sup>82</sup> A pre-1960s diagram of the Daihōonji main hall shows the Six Kannon, with three on each side of the altar, at the front of the hall, and behind them on the east side is a chamber for the *issaikyō*. Once again the Six Kannon seemed to protect the sutras. As mentioned previously, in 1951–54 the sutra hall standing at Daihōonji today was rebuilt with wood recycled from the former sutra hall at Kitano. I have no evidence that the sutras or the Kannon images were ever inside this building. Instead, the Six Kannon images are now again with the sutras in Daihōonji's storehouse.

If we search beyond the Daihōonji set to consider the Six Kannon's strong connections with texts, we can find evidence of other images and documents related to the cult that have the role of dharma protection. The earliest pictorial images of the Six Kannon as a group are incised on a bronze sutra container, dated to Hōen 7 (1141) (Fig. 23). The panels once formed a four-sided box that contained thirty-seven panels incised with the full text of the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>83</sup> The sides of the box are incised with Six Kannon images; two sides have two images each and the two other sides each have single images. In the twelfth century it was believed that the





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Eleven-headed (167.6 cm), Shō (169.1 cm), and Horse-headed Kannon (173.6 cm). Eleventh century. Wood. Buzaiin, Ishikawa prefecture.

age of *mappō* 末法 (end of the Buddhist law) had arrived, so sutra texts and other Buddhist objects were often buried in the ground in metal or stone containers to preserve the dharma for future generations. The box with the incised Six Kannon images was buried in a mound on the Kunisaki peninsula and unearthed during the Edo period. It came under scholarly scrutiny in 1926. Chōanji 長安寺 in Kyūshū (Ōita prefecture) still owns nineteen of the original thirty-seven panels; others are in various museums in Japan and in private collections such as the panels belonging to the Barnet and Burto Collection and the John C. Weber Collection.<sup>84</sup> Before being unearthed, the Six Kannon stood guard on the exterior of the box, protecting the *Lotus Sūtra* for centuries, and since most of the sutra text still survives, it might be surmised that their tutelary function was rather effective.

Another close connection between the Six Kannon and text can be found in the previously mentioned eleventh-century *Tale of Flowering Fortunes*. In one section of this tale there is a detailed description of the Medicine Buddha Hall that Fujiwara Michinaga had built at Hōjōji in 1023.<sup>85</sup> In addition to the seven images of the Medicine Buddha (Yakushi), the hall also enshrined images of the Six Kannon. In another section, the tale further explains, “[On] the pillar in front of the Six Kannon, all the verses from the *Lotus Sūtra*’s ‘Kannon chapter’ were written.”<sup>86</sup> This statement almost suggests that the text was placed on the column to protect the images from the outside in contrast to the way the written dharma enhanced the interiors of the images in the Daihōonji set of Six Kannon or the way the Chōanji images protected the contents of their box. In any case, *Tale of Flowering Fortunes* gives us another example of the intimacy between the Six Kannon images and texts.

There are many other beautiful examples of sculptures and paintings of the Six Kannon, but one other important partial group of images also demonstrates the relationship between the Six Kannon and texts because they have an unusual con-

nection to dharma protection. Since many of the images in Six Kannon sets have been lost, partial sets help illuminate the beginnings of the cult in Japan and how its worship developed. Located in a small temple called Buzaiin 豊財院 in Hakui 羽咋 city (Ishikawa prefecture), on Noto peninsula near Kanazawa, three eleventh-century sculptures of Eleven-headed, Horse-headed, and Shō Kannon bear such a close resemblance to each other that they must have originally been a set of Six Kannon since there is no standardized set of just these three Kannon (Fig. 24).

The Buzaiin Kannon images are now safely installed in a concrete storehouse, just up the hill from the main hall of this small temple. Like the Daihōonji sculptures, these images have also been relocated several times. But in contrast, before they were moved to this place during the seventeenth century, the other three members of the group must have become separated.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the Buzaiin images have not only shifted in function, but also in sectarian allegiance since they have landed in a Sōtō Zen temple. Because neither Fukūkenjaku nor Juntei are among the remaining three Kannon images, we cannot be sure if they were originally made within a Tendai or Shingon context. However, clues may be found in the following inscription found on the back of each image:

This Kannon out of three, restored on an auspicious day of the third month of Genroku 1 [1688], was made by Kōbō Daishi.

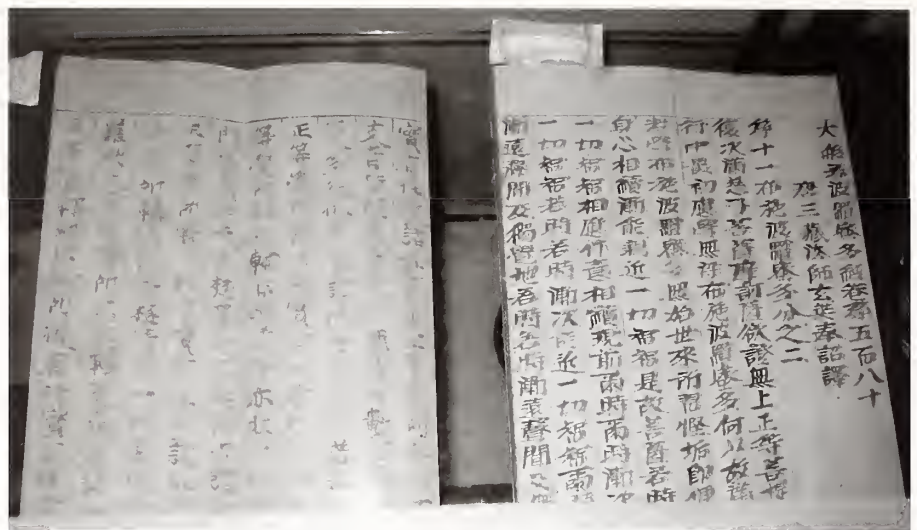
The patron Kanōya Yoheie offered them to the Hannya Hall at Buzaiin on Mount Hakuseki for the repose of Myōrin.

Gekkan, present abbot [seal].<sup>88</sup>

三観音の内 元禄元年戊辰三月吉日奉再興  
弘法大師御作  
為妙林菩提也 施主加能屋与兵衛  
白石山 豊財院 般若台 現住 月澗 判

We can discount the claim of attribution to Kōbō Daishi, or Kūkai (774–835)—the master responsible for bringing Shingon Buddhism to Japan—as pious fabrication, especially since he lived about two centuries before these were made. However, it is fascinating that Gekkan Gikō 月澗義光, who was responsible for restoring Buzaiin as a Zen school temple, seemed eager to explain the transition of these images from a Shingon to Zen context. Indeed Gekkan's inscriptions in large characters written in red lacquer across the backs of the shoulders of each statue are hardly discreet.

When Gekkan restored Buzaiin in the seventeenth century, it is possible that he may also have intended the three Kannon to join the temple to protect the dharma.



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Great Wisdom Sūtra (Sk. *Mahaprajñā paramitā sūtra*). Ink and blood on paper. Gekkan Gikō began copying the sutra in 1685. Buzaiin, Ishikawa prefecture.

26  
Great Wisdom Sūtra in drawers and case across from the three Kannon. Buzaiin storehouse, Ishikawa prefecture.

Buzaiin's other great treasure is the entire *Great Wisdom Sūtra* (Sk. *Mahaprajñā paramitā sūtra*; J. *Daihannyagyō* 大般若經), which was copied in blood from 1685 (Jōkyō 2) to 1696 (Genroku 9) (Fig. 25). According to temple records, Gekkan set about copying the six hundred volumes of the sutra in his own blood, and when he passed away twelve years later he had completed a little over half of them.<sup>89</sup> Kimura Takeshi conjectured that the patron Kanōya Yoheie 加能屋与兵衛 was so moved by Gekkan's efforts at copying the sutra that he sponsored restoring and moving the three Kannon images to the Hannya Hall at Buzaiin.<sup>90</sup> Of course we cannot know Gekkan and Yoheie's exact intentions, but from the inscriptions we can see that the Kannon images were donated to the Hannya Hall, which must have been built to house Buzaiin's *Daihannyagyō*. Perhaps the three Kannon sculptures inspired Gekkan and his disciples as they successfully carried out his vow to finish copying the remaining half of the six hundred volumes in 1746 (Enkyō 3) and then later served to protect the sutra. The Hannya Hall is now gone but the Kannon sculptures seem to continue to protect the sutra volumes that are installed inside the storehouse right across from them (Fig. 26).

There are certainly many deities, such as the combination of Shaka and Tahō, as well as Monju, who are better known for their dharma-protecting roles than the Six Kannon. The association of the Six Kannon with texts was probably never considered their main role, except perhaps when they were thought to be manifestations of *dhāraṇī*. A consideration of the Six Kannon cult reveals numerous connections to texts and clearly shows that the images could have had more than one function at a time.

### Conclusion

To investigate the functions of the Six Kannon images in Japan, we have been tracking the movements and changing religious functions of the Daihōonji sculptures, aspects about images that traditionally have been overlooked in art historical scholarship. A consideration of how religious images "live" and how their circumstances change over time is crucial to understanding the roles Buddhist icons play over time. In this article I have focused on three different themes related to the functions of the Six Kannon in reference to the Daihōonji images: specifi-





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Juntei Kannon with an altar set up for a service before the exhibition opening at Museum Rietberg, Zürich, 2007.

cally, the role of assisting beings in the six paths, associations with women, and relationships to texts. As this investigation of Six Kannon continues, I anticipate finding more intertwining themes, and other lines of inquiry will undoubtedly surface. In 2007 the Daihōonji Juntei Kannon traveled to Switzerland for a substantial exhibition on Kannon images at Museum Rietberg in Zürich (Fig. 27).<sup>91</sup> Standing at the entrance to the exhibition, Juntei brought along her history, but also took on a new role as a cultural ambassador for Japan.

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## NOTES

1. See Osaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan, *Saikoku sanjūsansho Kannon reijō no bijutsu* (Osaka: Osaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan, 1987).
2. I would like to thank Donald McCallum, Chari Pradel, Dale Slusser, Matthew P. McKelway, Kikuri Ryōnyo of Daihōonji, and the anonymous readers for *Ars Orientalis*, who graciously provided helpful comments for this article. Sawada Naoyuki of Tansei Institute was especially kind in allowing me to use his photographs of the Daihōonji images for this article. I would also like to acknowledge the generous assistance from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellowship, the University of Kansas General Research Fund Program, the Asian Cultural Council, the Asian Art and Religion Fellowship, and the Metropolitan Center for Far Eastern Art Studies.
3. Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 263.
4. Iwai Taketoshi, *Nihon kokenchiku seika* (Tokyo: Benridō, 1919): 1:18. The photo shows the former (not original) tile roof of the building.
5. For a discussion of the architectural features of the hall in English, see Jiro Murata, "The Main Hall of the Daihōonji Temple," *Japan Architect* 37, part 1 (June 1962): 78–83 and part 2 (July 1962): 80–85.
6. See Murai Jun, ed., *Jōen-bon Tsurezuregusa kaishaku to kenkyū* (Tokyo: Ofūsha, 1967), 460, and Yoshida Kenkō, *Essays in Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kenkō*, trans. Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 196.
7. *Hantōkō*, written by the monk Genryō 彦龍 (1458–1491), is quoted in the section on Daihōonji in *Nihon rekishi chimei taikai*. <http://rekishi.jnk21.com/> (accessed February 26, 2007). This section of *Hantōkō* is also quoted in *Shinshū Kyōto sōsho*, vol. 18 (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1976), 135–36. Other records give the temple an older pedigree by making the unlikely claim that it was built by Emperor Yōmei 用明 (r. 585–587) and later restored by the monk Gikū. The earliest record (untitled) to mention Yōmei building the temple is from Genna 1 (1615). See Kyōtōfu Kyōikuchō Bunkazai Hogoka, *Kokuho kenzōbutsu Daihōonji Hondō shūri koji hōkokusho* (Kyoto: Kyōtōfu Kyōikuchō Bunkazai Hogoka, 1954), 118.
8. For the inscription, see Kyōtōfu, *Kokuho*, 111 and Itō Shirō, *Senbon Shakadō Daihōonji no bijutsu to rekishi* (Kyoto: Yanagihara Shuppan, 2008), 186.
9. Kyōtōfu, *Kokuho*, 118 and Itō, *Senbon*, 103.
10. On the Ten Great Disciples, see Mizuno Keizaburō, ed., *Nihon chōkokushi kiso shiryō shūsei: Kamakura jidai: zōzō meiki hen 3* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2005): text vol., 91–113; plate vol., 98–134, no. 88. These images do not have a dated inscription, but are thought to be from Kaikei's later period, circa 1208–20. The images of a Buddha and Ten Disciples mentioned in *Hantōkō* are most likely the same as the thirteenth-century images at Daihōonji today.
11. See *Daihōonji engiki* 大報恩寺縁起記 in Kyōtōfu, *Kokuho*, 119 and Itō, *Senbon*, 189. This document is one of two *engi* that belong to the temple. It has a postscript on an attached piece of paper dated Kyōwa 3 (1803), but is considered to have been compiled earlier. About the date, Shimosaka Mamoru in Itō, *Senbon*, 76, proposes that the writing of this *engi* began in the fourteenth century. Kyōtōfu, *Kokuho*, 119 posits that it was made after the Muromachi period (1392–1573). Many Edo period records repeat the temple's relationship to the three schools. *Hantōkō* mentions the three schools, but not a date equivalent to 1235.

12. See an untitled document in Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 118 and also *Kyōuchi mairi*, compiled Hōei 5 (1708), reprinted in *Shinshū Kyoto sōsho*, 5:454–55.
13. Mōri Hisashi in Kikuri Tonnyo, ed., *Senbon Shakadō Daihōonji* (Kyoto: Benridō, 1956), 16–17; Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text vol., 191.
14. “Daihōonji Hondō,” *Asahi hyakka Nihon no kokuho* 7, no. 61 (1999): 22. For the story of another set of Six Kannon made earlier than the building in which they were ultimately housed, see Helen Craig McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980), 622–23. There was a ritual of transferring them to the Yakushi Hall in 1023. For original text, see Yamanaka Yutaka et al., ed. *Eiga monogatari* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1995–98), 402.
15. For a description of the Shaka and the Ten Disciples in the temporary hall in 1220, see *Daihōonji engiki* in Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 119. See *Hantōkō*. This is also repeated in an untitled temple record from the Genna 1 (1615). See Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 118.
16. *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi* in Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 119–22; Itō, *Senbon*, 192.
17. There are several examples of folding screens of *Rakuchū rakugaizu* (Pictures in and around the capital) that include the sutra hall with an inconsistent number of bays. See Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 132, fig. 46. See also Matthew P. McKelway, *Captalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 40–41 and Matthew P. McKelway, “Kitano Kyōdō to Suwa no shinji: Muromachi jidai senmen zu no ba to kioku,” in *Fūzokuga no suimiyaku* (Kyoto: Tankōsha, forthcoming).
- McKelway discusses various pictures of the sutra hall, including a recently discovered early sixteenth-century fan painting from a private collection (fig. 2.19, p. 40 in *Capitalscapes* and fig. 1 in “Kitano”) that shows the monks clearly reading sutras in the hall.
18. Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 117–18 and 121. The record also lists the Kitano Rinzōdō 輪藏堂 (Revolving sutra storage), which was formerly near the sutra hall at Kitano, but was modified and moved in 1871 to Zuiōji 瑞応寺 in Ehime prefecture, where it still exists. See Itō, *Senbon*, 54, 134–36.
19. On the Manbukyōe, see Umezawa Akiko, “Muromachi jidai no Kitano Manbukyōe,” *Nihon joshi daigakuin bungaku kenkyū kiyō* 8 (2002): 93–116. For the Motohide painting, see Kyoto National Museum, *Rakuchū rakugaizu* (Kyoto National Museum, 1997), 259, fig. 278, and for the detail that depicts the building in the Uesugi screens, see p. 56, panel 3.
20. As the most extreme description of the hall, which may likely be an exaggeration, according to *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi*, at one time the hall measured thirty by twenty-nine bays. See Itō, *Senbon*, 192 and Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 121. See also Utsui Nobuyoshi, “Kitanosha issaikyō to Kyōdō,” *Nihon bukkyō* 3 (October 1959): 43.
21. Umezawa, “Muromachi jidai,” 93–116.
22. *Rakuhoku Senbon Daihōonji engi* in Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 121 and Itō, *Senbon*, 140, 192. Itō, 142–43, also proposes that the Kamakura period Jizō (164.5 cm) at Daihōonji today is not only the Jizō image that was transferred from the sutra hall along with the Six Kannon, but it was also originally made to accompany the Six Kannon.
23. For an inscription that records the Six Kannon in the Daihōonji main hall in Kanbun 10 (1670), see Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 114. Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text vol., 197.
24. Parts of the old the sutra hall were recycled for use in the Daihōonji main hall. See Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 121–22 and Itō, *Senbon*, 93, 96, 136–37.
25. For a discussion of the constructions of the new and old sutra halls, see Ōmori Kenji in Kikuri, *Senbon Shakadō*, 9–12.
26. For a picture of the building with the front open, see <http://kata.wablog.com/782.html> (accessed February 3, 2009). For a photograph of the Taishidō main image of Shōtoku Taishi see Itō, *Senbon*, 33, 110.
27. Takeuchi Hideo, *Tenmangū* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1968), 199. According to Takeuchi Hideo, “Kitano Kyōdō ni suite,” *Shiseki to kobijutsu* 19 (January 1937): 20, the marker was discovered and excavated at Kitano in 1936 when temporary structures were being built at Kitano Shrine.
28. Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text vol., 197. For *munafuda* inscriptions, see Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 113–15 and Itō, *Senbon*, 186–88.
29. The photographs of interior of the hall were taken around 1951, before the restoration, see Kyotōfu, *Kokuho*, 11, pl. 13.
30. Itō, *Senbon*, 93, 137.
31. Murata, “The Main Hall,” part 1, 83.
32. Chūbu Nihon Shinbunsha, *Gunzō ni miru: Bukkyō bijutsu ten* (Nagoya: Chūbu Nihon Shinbunsha, 1963). The storehouse built in 1966 was converted into the reception area, where tickets and souvenirs are purchased. Itō, *Senbon*, 169. All of the Six Kannon were also exhibited at the Nara National Museum in 1977. See Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Kannon Bosatsu* (Nara: Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1977), 98–104. See also fig. 54, pp. 217, 429–30 in the deluxe edition of the catalogue published



- by Dōhōsha in Kyōto in 1981.
33. The fact that the *issaikyō* (entire canon of sutras) formerly in the Kitano sutra hall was granted Important Cultural Property status in 1981 helped to inspire the construction of the new storehouse. Itō, *Senbon*, 168.
  34. Other images that appear in multiple manifestations are the Six Jizō, who like the Six Kannon also aid beings in the six paths. See Françoise Wang-Toutain, *Le bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha en Chine du Ve au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1998), 279–80. About the Nine Amida, who represent the nine degrees of rebirth according to the Pure Land scriptures, see Mimi Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), 53, 55 and about the Six Jizō, see p. 138. About the Seven Yakushi, see Yui Suzuki, "The Medicine Master: Yakushi Buddha Icons and Devotional Practices in Heian Japan" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2005), 237–74.
  35. The twenty-five worlds (J. *nijūgou* 二十五有) consist of hell, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, the four continents inhabited by humans, the six realms of desire, the seven realms of the world of form, and the four heavens of the formless world. See Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 284, n. 287, and Paul L. Swanson, trans., *The Great Cessation and Contemplation (Mo-ho chih-kuan)*, compact disc (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., provisional edition, 2004), 196, n. 343.
  36. For a diagram of the forty attributes, see Ikawa Kazuko, "Kannonzō," *Nihon no bijutsu* 166 (March 1980): 48–49.
  37. For details on the mudra, see *Mikkyō daijiten* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1983), 1821. In most images of Horse-headed Kannon, the fingers point upward, but in the Daihōonji sculpture the fingers point forward. See also Inoue Kazutoshi, "Nyoirin Kannonzō, Batō Kannonzō," *Nihon no bijutsu* 312 (May 1992): 56, fig. 1. The *bakōin* 馬口印 mudra is only used for Horse-headed Kannon and is also called *batō konponin* 馬頭根本印 (fundamental mudra for Batō).
  38. *Roku Kannon gogyō* from 1252 in the Tendai manual *Asabashō* (Notes on the Buddha [a], Lotus [sa], and Diamond [ba] sections [of the Womb World]), compiled in Kenchō 4 (1252), in *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* (Tokyo: Meichō Fukyūkai, 1978), 38:152, gives an example from a set of Six Kannon with a six-armed Batō at Eshinin 恵心院 on Yokawa (Mount Hiei). Paul Groner, *Ryōgen and Mt. Hiei: Japanese Tendai in the Tenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 227, mentions that this temple was founded in 983.
  39. Baji bunkazaidan, ed., *Batō Kannon shinkō no hirogari* (Yokohama: Uma no Hakubutsukan, 1992). For the section on Six Kannon, see pp. 22–26.
  40. For a diagram of the heads, see Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text vol., 193.
  41. See Donald A. Wood, "Eleven Faces of the Bodhisattva" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1985), 368, for an English translation of the description of the heads in *Ekadaśamukha dhāraṇī sūtra*, translated into Chinese by Yasogupta in the sixth century. For the original, see *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1922–32), 46:150c, no. 1070. Note that the title in the Chinese of this version is not a direct translation of the Sanskrit. Wood also discusses the various translations of the sutra, see pp. 10–14.
  42. For a list of sutras pertaining to Juntei, see Asai Kazuharu, "Fukūkenjaku Kannon, Juntei Kannonzō," *Nihon no bijutsu* 382 (March 1998): 68–69.
  43. See Washizuka Hiromitsu, *Enlightenment Embodied* (New York: Japan Society, 1997), 24, and Robert Gimello, "Icon and Incantation: The Goddess Zhunti and the Role of Images in the Occult Buddhism of China," in *Images in Asian Religions: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Phyllis Granoff (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 233–34.
  44. Gimello, "Icon," 225–56. Eighteen is a special number for Kannon and according to Robert Gimello (see p. 247), who has done considerable work on this deity in China, the number of arms represent the eighteen characteristics (Sk. *āveṇīkadharma*; J. *fugūhō* 不共法) that are exclusive to Buddhist deities as distinct from other beings. He does not list the characteristics.
  45. While the Ono faction of Shingon promoted Juntei as a Kannon, the Hirasawa faction of Shingon considered Juntei to be a Buddha. See *Mikkyō daijiten*, 1105.
  46. *Roku Kannon gogyō*, dated to 1252, in *Asabashō*, 149–57.
  47. See Hayami Tasuku, *Kannon shinkō jiten* (Tokyo: Eibisu Kōshō Shuppan Kabushikigaisha, 2000), 281–312.
  48. See Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, plate vol., 217, figs. 99–76. A significant article about this image was written not long after the inscription was discovered. See Nishikawa Kyōtarō, "Daihōonji Roku Kannon Juntei Kannon ritsuzō," *Kokka* 800 (November 1958): 45–49.
  49. About the possible involvement of other sculptors with the set, see Miyama Takaaki, "Higo Jōkei no bosatsuzō ni tsuite," *Bukkyō geijutsu* 187 (November 1989): 108–109, and Nakajima Junichi,

- “Busshi Higo bettō Jōkei kō,” *Kanazawa-shi Monjokan kiyō* 4 (1981): 6–10. Each author closely examines the stylistic features of each image in the set and concludes that Jōkei made the Juntei but not the other images. Nakajima (p. 7) follows up on the point that Nishikawa (“Daihōonji Roku Kannon,” 46) made, which is that because Jōkei wrote “This Juntei” 此准提 in the inscription, he was distinguishing the statue from the other images in the group.
50. For the images of Yuima (Sk. Vimalakīrti) and Monju made by the other sculptor named Jōkei, see *Nara rokudaiji taikan*, vol. 8 of *Kōfukujī* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 43–46. About Higo Jōkei’s relationship to the Higo area, see Nakajima, “Busshi Higo,” 9. Nakajima proposed that Jōkei’s geographic connection to Higo in Kyūshū would have made it easier for him to access information about the Song style because of the region’s proximity to China.
  51. Mizuno Keizaburō, “Kuramadera Shō Kannonzō ni tsuite,” in Kokusai Kōryū Bijutsushi Kenkyūkai, *Kannon – sonzō to hensō: Kokusai kōryū bijutsushi kenkyūkai dai gokai shinpojiyamu* (Osaka: Kokusai Kōryū Bijutsushi Kenkyūkai, 1986), 87–93; Miyama, “Higo Jōkei,” 100–19; Mizuno Keizaburō, ed., *Nihon chōkokushi kiso shiryō shūsei: Kamakura jidai: zōzō meiki hen 4* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2006), text vol., 8–11; plate vol., 14–17, no. 150. The original location of this image is unknown, but it was transferred to Kuramadera in Antei 3 (1229). See Mizuno, p. 9.
  52. *Kanjizai Nyoirin Kannon Bosatsu yuga hōyō*, in *Taishō*, 20:213b, no. 1087.
  53. *Mohe zhiguan* by Zhiyi (538–97), in *Taishō*, 46:15ab, no. 1911. About a possible source for the Six Guanyin, see Swanson, *The Great Cessation*, 195. Swanson cites a list of five similar Guanyin found in a *dhāraṇī* text—*Qifo bapusa suo shuo da tuoluoni shenzhou jing*; J. *Shichibutsu hachibosatsu shosetsu dai darani jinjūkyō* 七佛八菩薩所說大陀羅尼神呪經, translated into Chinese during the Eastern Jin period (317–420)—that he believes may have been the source for the *Mohe zhiguan* group. See also Hayami, *Kannon shinkō jiten*, 284. For original text of the *dhāraṇī*, see *Taishō*, 21:541b8–10, no. 1332. Out of the standard Six Guanyin, only Great Compassion (Dabei) 大悲 is missing in this *dhāraṇī*.
  54. Swanson, *The Great Cessation*, 196. Although I quote Swanson’s translation, an equally good one, also with excellent annotation, may be found in Donner, *The Great Calming*, 283–85. See the table in this article for transliteration of Chinese names.
  55. For a good definition of *dhāraṇī* in general, see Ryūichi Abe, *The Weaving of Mantra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5–6. The meaning of the “six syllables” appears to be a mystery and the sutra itself does not explain it. Both Swanson, *The Great Cessation*, 195, n. 340, and Donner, *The Great Calming*, 283, n. 285, agree that although theories about their meaning have been proposed, none seems satisfactory.
  56. Donner, *The Great Calming*, 282.
  57. On the Ten Kings, see Stephen F. Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), 171–79, 223. For the scroll, see Roderick Whitfield and Anne Farrer, *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route* (London: British Museum), 83–85. On the six paths in Japan, see William LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 27–29, 49–51, 118–119. LaFleur notes (p. 118) that there are variations in the order of the paths and that asuras are sometimes left out, thus making five paths. For a more general discussion of the six paths in Asia, see Paul Mus, *La lumière sur les six voies* (Paris: Institut d’ethnologie, 1939), 153–83, and Stephen F. Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 3–49.
  58. I have summarized the story based upon an English translation by Amy McNair and a Japanese translation in *Kokuyaku issaikyō wakan senjutsu bu, shiden bu* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1988), 12:274–75. The original text is in *Sanbao ganying yaoliuehu* and was written by the Liao Buddhist historian Feizhuo (d. 1063). *Taishō*, 51:853b–c, no. 2084.
  59. *Taishō*, 51:853b, no. 2084. I used the Japanese translation in *Kokuyaku issaikyō*, 12:274 with assistance from Amy McNair. All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.
  60. See Hayami Tasuku, *Kannon shinkō* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1982), 189, and *Kannon shinkō jiten*, 296.
  61. See *Sanmairyū kudenshū* (Sanmai Ajari is another name for the Tendai monk Ryōyū 良祐, who compiled this text in 1069–72), in *Taishō*, 77:28ab, no. 2411; and the thirteenth-century text *Hishō mondō* by priest Raiyu (1226–1304) in *Taishō*, 79:424bc, no. 2536; and *Asabashō*, 149–57.
  62. *Sanmairyū kudenshū*, in *Taishō*, 77:28ab, no. 2411.
  63. For two excellent fourteenth-century examples from Daigoji, see Sawa Ryūken, ed., *Daigoji; Hihō* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1976), 8:108–109, 334, figs. 110–11. In these and other paintings, the body colors do not match Ningai’s

description. In *Zuzōshō* 圖像抄, compiled by Ejū 恵什 in 1135, we see that Ningai's text was followed by an explanation of how the Six Kannon images in Six-syllable mandara should look. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō zuzō* (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1922–32), 3:11C.

64. Takeuchi, *Tenmangū*, 202. See *Meitokuki* in *Gunsho ruijū* (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1957), 20:300.
65. *Tendai nanzan Mudōji konryū oshō den* 天台南山無動寺健立和尚伝 in *Gunsho ruijū*, 5:551. The text is abbreviated as *Konryū oshō den*. See also M. W. de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan: Sūtras and Ceremonies in Use in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries A.D. and Their History in Later Times* (Leiden: Brill, 1935), 388.
66. See McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering*, 629, for the translation below.

"How inspiring it is to recall their Original Pledge!" The sacred text says: The Great Merciful One, the Thousand-armed Kannon: the Dwellers in Hell. The Great Compassionate One, the Sacred Kannon: the Hungry Ghosts. The Lion-hearted One, the Horse-headed Kannon: the Beasts. The Great-light One, the Eleven-headed Kannon: the Asuras. The Celestial-being One, the Cundī Kannon: the Humans. The Great Brahmā One: the Prayer-granting-wheel Kannon: the Devas.

This list of Six Kannon corresponds more directly to *Mohe zhiguan* in that the relationship to hell and the hungry ghosts of the first two Kannon is the same. This is the reverse of Ningai's explanation. See McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering*, 783–84. For the original, see Yamanaka, *Eiga monogatari*, 412.

67. See Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text

vol., 192. This text is written as a postscript to *Nyoirin darani* (full title: *Bussetsu kanjizai bosatsu nyoishin darani jukyō*), which was found inside the sculpture. The text from the Horse-headed Kannon, which mentions the Six Kannon, was translated earlier.

68. See Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text vol. 198. See also *Iemitsu kyōki* 家光卿記 in Kurokawa Harumura, ed. *Rekidai zanketsu nikki* (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1969–71): 8:24, which states that Mochihisa temporarily controlled Higo in 1221.
69. See Kyōtōfu, *Kokuho*, 3–4, 111–12; Mōri Hisashi, in Kikuri, *Senbon Shakadō*, 2; Nakamura Masaaki, "Daihōonji," *Nihon no bijutsu kōgei* 503 (August 1980): 18. See also Itō, *Senbon*, 186.
70. Kōen (d. 1169), *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 in *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai* (Tokyo: Kokushi Taikai Kankōkai, 1932), 12:255. See also Groner, *Ryōgen*, 227 and 428, n. 21. *Onjōji denki* in *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho*, 127:67a, is a similar source about Kannon'in, but it is abbreviated and does not mention the Six Kannon.
71. See Toki Teiji, "Makura no sōshi 'subete Roku Kannon' no saiginmi," *Hanazono daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 12 (March 1980): 1–25. See the list section in *Makura no sōshi* (Shogakukan, 1997), 336, ch. 197.
72. For the translation below, see the auspicious childbirth section in *The Tale of the Heike*, trans. Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1988), 1:167–68.

Prince of the Blood Kakuho, lord abbot of Ninnaji, read the *Peacock Sutra*, and Prince of the Blood Kakukai, chief priest of the Tendai sect, chanted the sutra of the Seven Buddhas. Prince of the Blood Enkei, lord abbot of Mii-dera performed the ritual of Kongō-dōji. Furthermore the rituals of all these Buddhist dei-

ties—Godai Kokuzo, the Six Kannon and Ichi-ji Kinrin...were performed from beginning to end.... But the most powerful of all these prayers was that of the cloistered emperor....[he] lifted his voice to chant the sutra of Senju. At this moment a change came....And at last the consort was safely delivered of her child, a prince.

73. *Roku Kannon gōgyōki* from Kyoto University (dated Bunmei 6 [1474], eleventh month, twenty-sixth day) gives the main donor as Nyodai sesshu 女大施主 (female patron). *Roku Kannon gōgyōki* in *Monyōki* 文葉記 (dated Bunmei 6 [1474] ninth month, twenty-first day) in *Taishō zuzō*, 12:551–52, no. 169, lists three patrons. Melissa McCormick identified the patrons as Ashikaga Yoshimasa 足利義政 (1435–1490), his wife Hino Tomiko 日野富子 (1440–1496) and son Yoshihisa 義尚 (1465–1489). Personal communication, April 6, 2007. The names of the monks and locations and the inclusion of Fukūenjaku Kannon attest to the fact that both of these were Tendai rituals held in Kyoto.
74. For a general discussion of deposits placed inside images, see Kurata Bunsaku, "Zōnai nōnyūhin," *Nihon no bijutsu* 86 (July 1973); for the Daihōonji Six Kannon see pp. 67–70.
75. Note that the texts were taken out of the images and are now kept in a paulownia box in the temple storehouse. See Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, text vol., 192, n. 2 and 199.
76. Mizuno, *Nihon chōkokushi* 3, plate vol., 220, fig. 99–83 and text vol., p. 192.
77. The strong relationship between the Six Kannon and their representation in the Six-syllable mandala is important to note. In some cases, the mandara have Sanskrit seed syllables substituting for images of Kannon. For examples, see *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪鈔, "Rokujikyōhō"



- section, written by Kanshin 寛信 in 1127, in *Taishō zuzō*, 4:351, 353, 356, 361. The subject of the Six-syllable mandala is beyond the scope of this paper, and I will pursue it elsewhere.
78. According to Takeuchi, *Tenmangū*, 204, the old sutra hall was moved to Daihōon-ji in 1670 and another one was built just west of its old site at Kitano in the Tenwa era (1681–83). It is more likely that the old sutra hall was moved in pieces and the parts were reused in the Daihōonji main hall.
79. Akisato Ritō (fl. 1780–1814), *Miyako meisho zue* (Kyoto: Daihan Shorin, 1804). In an edition owned by the Spencer Museum of Art (1986.97ab), the author uses his alternate name Akisato Shōseki. For a reproduction of the 1780 original, see Ikeda Yasaburō, et al., *Nihon meisho fūzoku zue* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1979), 8:194. Note also that Daihōonji was also called Ikyōkeiji 遺教經寺 (or Yuikyōgyōji) during the Edo period. See Kikuri, *Senbon Shakadō*, 1.
80. Itō, *Senbon*, 138. Itō argues that the two images date from Eikyō 10 (1438) and were the main images of the sutra hall. If we accept this date, the images postdate the construction of the hall by thirty-seven years.
81. Among Daihōonji's treasures that formerly belonged to Kyōōdō is a wooden plaque, with the word "Kyōōdō" carved into it, which was made to hang on the outside of the hall. See "Daihōonji Hondō," in *Asahi hyakka Nihon no kokuhō*, 24. See also Itō, *Senbon*, 143. Daigoji Abbot Mansai (1378–1435) gives the date that the plaque was carved as Ōei 32 (1425), tenth month, fifth day, in his diary, *Mansai jūgo nikki* 満濟准后日記, *Zoku gunsho ruijū* (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kankōkai, 1957), supplement vol. 1a:325.
82. Itō, *Senbon*, 144.
83. Kyūshū Rekishi Shiryōkan, *Bungo Kunisaki Chōanji, Kyūshū no jisha shirizu* (Fukuokaken Dazaifushi: Kyūshū Rekishi Shiryōkan, 1988), 9:11–16, figs. 28–41; Taguchi Eiichi, "Dōban Hok-kekyō, tsuketari dō hakoita," *Kokka* 957 (May 1973): 44–52; *Bungo Takadashi shitsūshi* (Ōita, Usa: Bungo Takadashi, 1998), 799–803. The *bonji* on the reverse is the one for Juntei, but most sources (including Taguchi) favor the identification as a Fukūkenjaku, which corresponds to the fact that Chōanji was a Tendai temple at the time. With one head and eight arms, one of which holds a *shakujō* (ringed staff), the image looks more like Fukūkenjaku than Juntei. Interestingly, instead of the usual forty-two arms for a Thousand-armed Kannon, the one in this group has only two in the mudra of adoration (J. *gasshōin*).
84. Melaine Trede, ed., *Arts of Japan: The John C. Weber Collection* (Berlin: Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2006), 44–45. According to the catalogue essay by Max Moerman (p. 44), all but two of the original plaques of text are accounted for. See also D. Max Moerman, "The Archeology of Anxiety: An Underground History of Heian Religion," in *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries*, ed. Mikael Adolphson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 245–71, and specifically pp. 260 and 263.
85. Michinaga erected a Yakushi hall east of the Golden hall of Hōjōji. See Yamanaka, *Eiga monogatari*, 402, 410–11. I translate the *Eiga monogatari* (p. 402) passage as follows: "There are *jōroku* 丈六 (approx. 480 cm) Seven Yakushi all of gold, standing figures of Nikkō 日光 (Sunlight, Sk. Sūryaprabha) and Gakkō 月光 (Moonlight, Sk. Candraprabha), and the Six Kannon images are also *jōroku*. The way the robes flow over their lion pedestals looks extremely elegant." For a different translation, see McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering*, 622.
86. For the following translation, see McCullough, *A Tale of Flowering*, 627–28.
- The Sixth Month soon came, and on the Twenty-sixth the Healing Buddha Hall was dedicated amid ceremonies of indescribable grandeur. As usual, the hall dazzled the eye: one could scarcely make anything out. Shōshi and Rinshi occupied rooms on the north side, where blinds had been hung along the eavechambers. The architectural plan, the dog barricade, and all the other details were exactly the same as in the Western Hall [Amidadō]. Representations of the Twelve Great Vows were painted on the inner pillars in the front of the Healing Buddhas, and other paintings depicting verses from the "Kannon" chapter decorated the pillars facing the six images of Kannon. The reader may imagine the skill with which they were executed by the Iimuro Holy Teacher En'en.
87. Before the images were donated to Buzaiin and moved by Gekkan Gikō, who was the disciple of Jōtsū 恕通 in Genroku 1 (1688), they were located in the Kannon Hall of Hakuigun Yada 矢駄 village, Shikamachi 志賀町. See Kuno Takeshi, *Kannon sōkan* (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, 1986), 274, and Fujimori Takeshi, *Nihon no kannonzō* (Tokyo: Shōgakusan, 2003), 189.
88. Kimura Takeshi, "Hakusekisan Buzaiin Notoshi ni okeru Sōtoshū to Obaku to no kakawari," *Obaku bunka* 121 (2000–2001): 182–83. See also *Hakuishi no bunkazai* (Hakui: Hakuishi Bunkazai Kyōikuiinkai, 1968), 7. Much of the lower area of each image has been restored. See

also *Hakuishishi: chūsei shaji hen*  
(Hakuishi Shihensaniinkai, 1975),  
492–95.

89. Kimura, “Hakusekisan,” 183. There is also an image of Amida painted in blood by the monk Dokutan 独湛 from Manpukuji, which was made around the same the same time as the sutras. The painting of Amida and a scroll with the calligraphy “Namu Daihannyagyō” (also in blood) are both included in my figure 26. See Kimura, “Hakusekisan,” 184–85, fig. 4, and Arawakawa Hirokazu, “Aki no Buzaiin,” *Museum* 130 (January 1962): 33. Now the color of the text of the sutra is reddish brown. When I asked the temple caretaker about the blood, she told me that according to temple legend, the monks used red ink to supplement the blood.
90. Kimura, “Hakusekisan,” 183.
91. Katharina Epprecht et al., *Kannon—Divine Compassion: Early Buddhist Art from Japan* (Zürich: Museum Rietberg, 2007), 170–71, cat. no. 28.

## ART HISTORY AS A THEORY OF ART

*Bihzad and The Visual Anthropology of Iran*

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, the work of Kamal al-Din Bihzad has drawn the attention of many scholars. Within Persian culture itself, interest in Bihzad's work had never disappeared. Both Iranians and contemporary scholars agree on one thing: the gigantic figure of Bihzad serves as a key to the understanding of all Persian miniatures. However, it is not only miniature that is associated with the name of the Herati artist. In order to understand this, it is interesting to compare Bihzad with another important figure, the architect Qawam al-Din Shirazi, who lived in the same city of Herat a few decades before him. They contributed a broadening artistic space to the art and architecture of Iranian, the creation of flexible environments that gradually opened up according to a defined order and rhythm. In other words, both masters decisively codified the discourses of architecture and of the fine arts that preceded them. Moreover, both masters endowed future Iranian architecture and painting with form, thought, and spatial expression. Comparing the artist with the architect is necessary. In the illustrations to Saadi's "Bustan" in the Cairo National Library (the only illustrations that can be attributed to him without reservation), Bihzad pays particular attention to architecture. It was architecture, one could say, that served as a kind of focal point for all forms of art in medieval Herat. I shall return to a more detailed discussion of the prominent role of architectural thought in Bihzad's work later.

Contemporary historians of Iranian art have failed to take into account highly developed norms of perception presented by scholars in other fields. We will discuss this later using A. Riegl's discoveries in ornamental gestalt as an example. A large amount of literature on poetics developed for the multicultural discipline of "visual poetics" also exists. Nor can one ignore all the accomplishments of contemporary philosophy. The past, in its relationship to the present, deserves a more attentive approach, an approach that is both creative and collaborative. Our relationship to the past is not as faultless as it might seem. This is why I chose the problem of the past and time as one of the topics for the exposition that follows.

The appearance of several monographs and a number of articles on Bihzad is not unexpected. This reflects a tendency that can be characterized as a refinement of the historical significance of Bihzad's work in the context of Iranian painting. Such work is necessary, as there are already summaries of the life and work of Bihzad in, for example, the two editions of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, as well as in the *Encyclopedia Iranica* (R. Ettinghausen and P. Soucek). These works seem to argue that, on a general level at least, everything of significance concerning Bihzad's work has already been said.

These general remarks are extremely important with regard to two recent extensive studies dedicated to Bihzad's oeuvre, namely, the voluminous works of A. Bahari<sup>1</sup> and Michael Barry.<sup>2</sup> Bahari's book is calm, modest, and reserved, in the



spirit of traditional art history of the nineteenth century. It is of little importance that the author expands Bihzad's oeuvre; other scholars have done it as well. He attributes to Bihzad's hand just about anything that could be compared to the illustrations of the single manuscript that undoubtedly contained Bihzad's work, Saadi's "Bustan."

However, I will focus my attention on Barry's work, because of its broad scope. This book is much more pretentious than the former, intending to leave the reader with the possibility of recognizing the author's desire to construct his own history and theory of Iranian visual history in the Muslim period. To the American scholar's credit, he attempts to introduce Bihzad's art, and Iranian art in general, into the context of global art history. Names such as those of Velasquez, Goya, Matisse, Kandinsky, and of many other European artists appear several times in the book. For a variety of reasons, Barry's book deserves a critical evaluation of the theoretical and methodological bases of its scholarship, for without such an evaluation it is difficult to divine the book's purpose, as well as the development of the author's train of thought. His book is not, properly speaking, about art history. Instead, the author is occupied with a panoramic exposition of the historical culture of Iran and of Khorasan. Along the way, he enters the field of Sufi history in summarizing different sources and historical personalities. He is interested in the interrelationships between Iranian culture and China, Byzantium, India, and Ottoman Turkey, while simultaneously being occupied with such details as the significance of haloes, doorways, the oft-depicted cliffs in Persian miniature, all this while examining the impact of Far Eastern art on Iranian culture.

At the same time, Barry's book clearly lacks an analytical framework. He tries to make up for this absence with extremely dubious constructions from the field of art poetics. The words, "Figurative Art," included in the title, do not, first of all, receive requisite development as his study takes its course. Second, they do not correspond to the tasks of contemporary art history, which tends to place its focus on a deep analysis of what may be called visual anthropology, that is to say the ways in which people are meant to be seen. The demands of art historians and theoreticians in contemporary scholarship in the sphere of realizing specific methodological tasks are changing.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see later, Barry's work, in its theoretical approach to the material examined, cannot withstand criticism.

All of this demands a response aimed at discussing the author's many conclusions, and placing them within the context of Iranian history and art theory. My response to Barry's book derives from the problems it poses. I am primarily interested in those modes, categories, and concepts, with whose help artifacts come into being, along with the discursive unities of the culture in question. Discourse can be compared with what was called in scholastic theology "the main principle, the

regulating action” (*principium importans ordinem ad actum*). It is not a mentality or a frame of mind, as Panofsky has written. It is precisely a discourse that impacts the creative activity of an artist, whether it comes from religious philosophy, architecture, or the fine arts. For this reason, the architect would become a scholar, and in medieval Iran several architects were immersed in Sufi doctrine. In their work, artists were not only loyal to the general orientation of thought, their pilot star was also a unified creative ethos and operational thought. This does not mean that each artist looked at the world with one set of eyes and acted according to a single method, each employing the same mode of action (*modus operandi*). They were all united by the general principle of their relationship to the material, that is, the regulatory process of creative activity. It follows that the most important characteristic of discourse is *free choice* as a consequence of its measure, by which means there appears in the discourse the possibility to choose that which is particular to it as a result of a defined discursive practice. I do insist that there is a discourse of art and architecture that is independent of language. After all, it is clear that natural language cannot become socialized without the support of parallel discursive practices in other spheres of culture. It is not impossible that the specific discourses of poetry, art, and architecture already in the medieval period appear earlier than, or, at the very least, independently of the creation of developed and conceptually based linguistic discourse. Later on, I will give an example of this.

Barry’s book consists of five chapters, the aim of which is not only a discussion of Bihzad’s art, but also the presentation of a fairly large number of other questions that come up as the work progresses. In the first chapter in particular, “Persian Miniature and the Twentieth Century Song of Glory,” the author discusses the impact of Persian miniature on twentieth-century European art. The second chapter, “The Formation of Islamic Figurative Art: From the Eighth to Fifteenth Centuries,” is dedicated to the author’s understanding of the history of Iranian art, which is presented with many lacunae that will be addressed in the second section of my review. The third chapter, “Bihzad as Guildmaster,” serves as an introduction to the chapters on Bihzad that follow. The topic of Bihzad’s work in Herat is handled in a much broader and better fashion in Bahari’s book.<sup>4</sup> The fourth, “Zulayka’s Castle” and fifth, “Alexander’s Cave” chapters are directly concerned with the work of Bihzad. The chapter titles are somewhat misleading inasmuch as the author, in one way or another, touches upon Bihzad’s work in each chapter. In this review, what interests me is not what the author does, but how and in what manner he attempts to solve the presented problems. Naturally, I will be unable to address everything that the author touches upon. I will focus only on the author’s errors, which seem to be particularly typical mistakes of fundamental significance for the entire book, as well as for the study of Iranian art history.

### Terms and Tropes

I will begin my review of Barry's book with the terminology and tropes he uses. This will allow for a clearer demonstration of his theoretical framework and of his ability to contend with the tasks that present themselves. Terminology is hardly insignificant in the type of complicated analytic approach the author offers. Moreover, it is precisely terminology that turns out to be firmly connected with the author's goals and tasks. Barry defines the tasks of his book as follows:

"Bihzad displays a mastery of abstract pattern in overall terms of color and composition. Yet he also betrays an astonishing feel for figurative detail when his pictures are carefully examined. And when studied in depth, these same figurative details, in turn, disclose a complete symbolic code" (p. 37).

"To restore a measure of symbolic transparency of Bihzad's paintings, and the works of his school, must therefore be the purpose of this essay. I dedicate this text to my teacher, Stuart Cary Welch, because he so exactly taught us all to look in depth, and with respect, at "Persian miniatures" (p. 45).

Indeed, one can hardly believe one's eyes after having read the mention of a "complete symbolic code" present in Bihzad's work. The author has made a fundamental "discovery" in the sphere of the poetics in the visual culture of medieval Iran. He speaks of a "symbolic transparency" in Bihzad's art, which is in stark contradiction to all the rules of poetic thought among Iranians. Furthermore, several times, and without reservation, he undertakes a discussion of either an "allegorical code" (p. 27) or a "symbolic code" (p. 37) of the same artist. The surprising discussion of the simultaneously symbolic and allegorical method of Bihzad and Iranian culture in general continues throughout the book right up to the first lines of the book's conclusion. The author's poor understanding of Iranian art lies beyond what is permissible in scholarly work. I could conclude with this observation, but my essay also intends to establish the principle of an analytical approach to Bihzad's art and all of Iranian culture. And terminology, as mentioned earlier, serves as a mirror for the scholar's preparation for such an undertaking, which will be an examination of the horizons of Iranian visual anthropology within the framework of Iranian poetics.<sup>5</sup>

Given this goal, it is necessary to clarify how a symbol is different from allegory, as well as how the concept of "transparency" differs from "code." A symbol is an image, taken in its semiotic aspect, which is distinguished by its organic nature and inexhaustible, multiple meanings. Allegory is marked by a clear idea in a concrete image. For example, Minerva is wisdom, Diana is purity, Venus is beauty,



and so on. To conflate these two categories of visual thinking is not allowable in any case, although in Hellenic times this was occasionally and unjustifiably done. The principal difference between symbol and allegory lies in the fact that the meaning of the symbol cannot be deciphered with a simple effort of judgment (as Barry constantly does); a symbol is always, without exception, believed in — after all, this is not, in fact, a code, regardless of the author's claims. On the other hand, both symbol and allegory are transparent, but it is precisely for this reason that they cannot, in any circumstance, be called a code. The author's expression "complete symbolic code" is sheer nonsense, even within the fields of Byzantine and ancient Russian art. This represents a complete misunderstanding of the nature of tropes, which should be known to any scholar who undertakes an examination of medieval culture, whether it is literature, architecture, or the fine arts.

The symbol does not exist in the arsenal of poetic devices in medieval Iranian culture.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the symbol as a "prepared word"<sup>7</sup> does not exist in the arsenal of rhetorical devices. I will go even further in stating that the poetic and artistic thought of Iran is asymbolic.

The metaphor is what occupies the Iranian master, whether he is a poet, architect, or artist. This has been true since early in the history of Iranian culture. In passing, it should be stated that in Islam as a whole, metaphoric thinking was essential from the earliest of times, when the rhetorical rules (*'ilm al-badi'*) of Muslim poets were being formulated.<sup>8</sup> This was a universal rule, no matter what art form was being practiced. The lessons of rhetoric, taken from Aristotle, were solidly adapted by Muslim philosophers and logicians (first and foremost, by al-Farabi and Ibn Sina).

And so, metaphor: Metaphor consistently demands interpretation, as opposed to the symbol. The metaphor is opaque, as if it is pronounced in a foreign tongue and stubbornly demands its own translation. Metaphors are inexhaustible, while the symbol is not, which is why Paul Ricoeur famously stated that when metaphor ends, it transforms itself into a symbol. Such is the metaphorical language of mystics, called in Islam "the language of birds" (*lisan at-tayr, zaban-e morghan*) or "the secret language" (*lisan al-ghayb*). And this is why the hermeneutical institution of *sharh*, the commentary on vital poetic events in poetry, flourished in Iranian culture. In a way, illustrations accompanying poetic texts and miniatures served as their own sort of "sharh." Beginning from the early Herat period, and particularly in the time of Bihzad, miniaturists interpreted the text in their own manner, practically pushing it beyond the boundaries of the regular field of representation. The border outlining the edge of an illustration fulfilled a particular function, announcing the crossing of an illustration first beyond its own boundaries, and later beyond the boundary of the book itself.

Through several rather emotional phrases, Barry gives us a clear indication of the seriousness with which he decided to treat the tropes of Bihzad, as well as his pretensions for preeminence in existing scholarly work on the study of the visual culture of medieval Iran (p. 39): "Nor has 20TH century scholarship succeeded in deciphering Bihzad's visual code of symbols, or virtual hieroglyphic systems."

Here is one more small passage, where the author even includes the term "enigma":

"The very existence of the Persian miniature addresses the innermost religious enigma of Islam..." (p. 45)

Thus, Barry does not understand what is most basic; he introduces artistic terms into the realm of another culture, for symbol and allegory were not a part of universal Iranian poetics. The Byzantines thought in symbols, while during the Baroque period artists and patrons thought allegorically, emblematically, and enigmatically. If the author had any additional ideas with regard to the symbolic, allegorical, semiotic, and enigmatic nature of Iranian miniature and of Bihzad, he should have laid them out immediately and without reservation. Had he done so, he would have been the first to discover the universal rhetoric of Iran. But, as things stand, the author should have seriously attempted to learn poetics as a whole, as well as the rules of the organization of "the ready word" in Persian culture. Otherwise, one cannot help but get the impression of superficiality, as well as his dubious wish to present a fantasy for reality.

And here is one more term, taken at random. In the beginning of his book, Barry writes about the symbolism of alchemy; however, in as far as alchemy is related to poetry, art, and architecture, the meaning of the term itself is not important. The importance of alchemy lies in the alchemic transmutation. Ghazali, in his tract "The Happiness of Alchemy," defined the term in the following way: "indicating transmutation, e.g. the transformation of a common substance into something more highly valued."<sup>9</sup> Alchemy occupies itself precisely with the transmutation of ideas, categories, and images. Thus it should be noted that Ghazali wrote of the transmutation of beauty in poetry and the fine arts in the name of inner beauty.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Horizon of the Past and the Composition of Iranian Visual Anthropology**

Before turning to Bihzad's own work, Barry addresses the sources of Muslim figurative art. In particular, he focuses on those of the Iranians. He is correct in addressing this topic at the very beginning, in order to strengthen the fundamental positions that follow. The first two subchapters, "The Paradox of Royal Art" and "Court Art, not 'Ethnic' Art," attempt to direct the attention of the reader

toward the significance of “Royal Art” as a tradition in the preparation of royal manuscripts, as well as a particular discourse within Islam:

“Indeed, palace frescoes and illustrated manuscripts in Islam were undeniable manifestations of kingly power. They were paid for by princes and created by court-sponsored craftsmen who took a long time and used expensive materials. However, one remarkable feature of such supposedly eccentric “royal” art is that its existence is almost as old as Islam itself.” (p. 49)

As additional material intended to serve as uncontested evidence to the above, the author introduces several illustrations with depictions of royal persons from the *Kitab al-Aghani*, Panjikent frescoes, and two images with throne scenes from the early metalwork from eastern Iran.

The author is hardly the first to talk about the royal character of certain illustrations on metalwork and in the manuscripts of Islamic, and particularly Persian, art; however, the familiar theme of royal art deserves a deeper look. The continuous illustrative tradition of Iran in the Muslim period is of primary concern if one wants to understand the stylistic foundations of the appearance of Bihzad’s work.

Royal art is actually a reduced representation of the integral style and wide-reaching theme of princely or aristocratic art. The main problem, however, does not lie in the Arabic royal image, the Abbasid institution of the *futuwwa*, or even in its Iranian variant, *jawanmardi*,<sup>11</sup> but rather in the epic discourse of eastern Iranian culture, which finds its origin in the pre-Islamic period. Undoubtedly, the Iranian shah was always the central figure of the aristocratic circle, similar to the knights of Kay Khosraw’s “round table” or that of King Arthur.<sup>12</sup> The shah embodied the chivalric idea, becoming the central personage of the chivalric circle. This is precisely why in the art of the East and West, the aristocratic idea was reduced, and the person who himself embodies the very idea of chivalry was the one depicted. Thus, when Barry introduces the example of illustrations from Eastern Iranian metalwork and the frescoes of Panjikent, they could in no way help him understand the essence of the epic style of Eastern Iran. They remain illustrations of a concept not understood by him, namely, the aristocratic ideal of Eastern Iran. For those who have read Firdousi’s “Shahnameh,” the following words of Barry’s concerning the “theology” of the text reveal the level of his knowledge and comprehension of the text:

“The theology of Firdawsi’s poem, while not overly anti-Islamic, is fundamentally dualist, although its formulation remains rather diffuse and vague.” (p. 346)



Firdawsi's "Shahnameh" reflected the princely and, it must be said, ethnic discourse on Iran that existed among the Samanids and Ghaznevids. The text itself was part of the ethos of eastern and western Iran. However, even before the actual "Shahnameh" text was widespread, there already existed in Samanid culture a depiction of knights, in both frescoes and ceramics. It would make sense to compare not only the pictorial nature of the epic style of the text and its illustrations, but also its pre-pictorial status, the phenomenology of the universal princely ethos and discourse as an example of addressing the underlined physicality of that style.

The world of the Shahnameh is filled with the physical presence of Iranian knights; we never discover anything about the individual features of the heroes, yet time and again we run into the monumental figure of this or that knight who possesses the fullness of a powerful body. The style of the monumental epic style is fully reflected in the illustrated figures of the knights in the ceramics from Transoxiana and Khorasan in the Samanid period, first and foremost in the ceramics of Samakrand and Nishapur, which existed before the appearance of Firdosawi's text.<sup>13</sup>

We will begin with the fact that the physical world of Samanid ceramics clearly pushes out space. There is simply no excess space; the background replaces it. For figures that are already filled out, there is no need of living space. The human horizon of Samanid ceramics was occupied exclusively with the corporeal figures that fully coincide with the physical presence of the text. Artists attempted to fill in the illustrated area not so much with the volume of a certain figure, but rather by portraying precisely the bodily traits of the character and its gestures, but in no way by mere mimicry. In any situation, whether it was a duel, feast, hunt, or dance, the faces of the heroes of the Samanid scenes were always left out, deprived of any emotions.

Individuals in the Samanid period were represented in a truly epic style that does remind one of the frescoes of Panjikent. However, the essence of the matter does not lie in the influence of pre-Islamic depictions on the Samanid illustrations of Eastern Iran, even if the ceramics themselves come from Samarkand. Archaeologists, both in Samarkand and in the close-by Panjikent, have excavated a large number of fresco illustrations from the pre-Islamic period. The illustrations on the famous Sassanian silver plates contain images of identified individuals, specifically, kings hunting and feasting.

These subjects were preserved in the Muslim period, but their interpretation was not. Instead, a unified epic style penetrated poetry, music, architecture, and the fine arts of this transition period. The goal of art from Samanid times was not the replacement of the past, but rather the continuation of the epic style and

discourse, the means of which could come into existence in the easily recognizable outlines of various cultural monuments. As M. Merleau-Ponty has brilliantly shown in his book, *Phenomenology of Perception*, perception is not memory, but rather the deepening of the *horizon* of the past and the consequential development of chosen perspectives. Such a perspectival and ethnic consciousness among the Iranians was epic discourse, one of the embodiments of which are the scenes that are now called royal. They identify the unique character of the physicality of Samanid illustrations, which distinguishes the gestalt of the period with the entire integrity and order of the epic discourse of the Samanid dynasty—ceramics and frescoes, and particularly the later text of the *Shahnameh*.

Thus, the physical character of the figures in Samanid ceramics is implicit in the epic discourse in the sense that the optics of the positioning of bodies allows for the organic shift toward the imagined perception of the epic tale, which serves as the true environment of their surroundings. A singular environment of the epic style could consist of resonating relationships between ceramic illustrations and epic tales. Let us call this trait a stylistic resonance.

The visual anthropology of Iran cannot be examined without a demonstration of the continuity of stylistic and conceptual connections between ceramic illustrations and those of metalworking and miniatures. A mistaken example can be found in Barry's book. In the passage on the meaning of haloes (59–60), why did he omit the vast number of analogous depictions in metalwares of the same period?<sup>14</sup> After all, the combination of haloes and empty, unfinished faces would give us a completely different perspective for understanding the meaning of this compatibility.<sup>15</sup> Barry explains the appearance of haloes as a result of an interaction with Byzantine art, introducing at the same time the analogy of Byzantine influence on the Umayyads. The preservation of epic styles and the representations of heroes of epic and depictive narration during the Samanid and Seldjuk periods through the illumination of God's glory (*farn, farr*) are well known. What the Byzantines and Umayyads have to do with it, however, remains completely inscrutable. There can be no discussion of the influence of the former on the latter, especially since this was the only macro-environment that existed, especially before the iconoclastic period, a particular indicator of which was the *continuity* of artistic space, as opposed to political and or confessional space. The testaments of the Abrahamic unity of three cultures—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—were always clear, particularly when it came to the construction of temples, which in our time Heidegger would refer to as the "source of creation."<sup>16</sup>

The particularities of the epic style and the unity of epic discourse as a whole were preserved even in subsequent periods. Since the Samanids had managed to work out such a powerful style, there was no need in the Seljuk period to introduce

something radically different. This can be proven by the many ceramic illustrations from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as by the miniatures from “Shahnameh” manuscripts of 1330–50. However, changes did take place even as the thematics of the previous period were preserved. In addition, a new discourse took center stage, a romantic discourse, associated with the name of Nizami and the entire romantic tendency in Persian literature that was to follow. As far as the relationship between Nizami’s poetics and those of “Shahnameh” are concerned, the rise of individualized heroes in the former must be noted. Instead of the static presentation of heroes throughout the stories of Firdowasi, Nizami’s characters are presented dynamically in the development of their psychological characteristics. Finally, Nizami’s space of action surrounding his characters is significantly broadened.

This discourse, and not the text itself, was influential to a large degree, particularly on miniatures.<sup>17</sup> The miniature finally took on self-sufficient visual space, and the visual anthropology of Iran in the fourteenth century reached its second phase. The culmination of this stage took place during Bihzad’s time. However, before the appearance of Herati miniatures at the very end of the fourteenth century, there appeared in Baghdad the miniatures of two exceptional artists by the names of Abd al-Hayy and Junayd, who adopted, completely and conceptually, the entire space of the manuscript page. The “logosphere” of the manuscript page was completely emptied, giving its space over to the “iconosphere,” which would, with time, go beyond the borders of the manuscript itself, pouring out onto the textiles, for example, worn by fashionable women. The interrelationship between the deep discourse of the logosphere and the iconosphere would be noted later; already in the Safavid period it would be noticed by Qadi-Ahmad who once gave the same *qalam* to the quill of the scribe as to that of the artist.

Before addressing Bihzad’s miniatures directly, we must deal with a central topic for the history of Iranian art: the influence of Far Eastern art on Iranian miniatures. This is all the more vital since Barry (and not only Barry) set aside significant space for this topic, while making frequent references to the stylistic method of Bihzad. And in this part of his narration, the author once again does not succeed in escaping an embarrassing error, which, by the way, is characteristic of many historians of Iranian art.

Barry speaks of this time in the following way:

“The full transmutation of the Chinese-derived art of the Il-Khan era, into the classical aesthetics of the Neoplatonic “Persianate” style of the fifteenth century, occurred, however, not so much in Iran proper, as in what now is Iraq.” (p. 120)



The appearance and confirmation of its own kind of chinoiserie in post-Mongol Iran is an extremely important topic, despite the fact that Sinologists write of evident signs of Iranian influence on China.<sup>18</sup> However, it is impossible to agree with the author's argument as to the degree of Chinese influence on Iranian art, as it is with his reference to "neoplatonic style," which apparently means, quite simply, Sufi teachings.<sup>19</sup> Before the passage just quoted, Barry talks about the influence of Chinese art, which was brought to Iran by the Mongols, in much greater detail and in greater breadth. As we already know, our art historian loves the rather weighty word *influence*. However, what is important is neither influence, nor adaptation, nor even "complete transformation" (with the hint of passive necessity), but rather the problem of the reception of the "Other" as one's own in Iranian culture. Barry handles the nuances of the reception of the Other rather poorly, even creating the impression that his knowledge of theory is on the level of European learning at the end of the nineteenth century, before the flowering of Austrian, German, French, and Russian schools of deep analysis (the psychology of art and literature, gestalt theory, phenomenology, the formal method of the OPOIAZ). French philosophy has accomplished much in the past generation; for example, in the sphere of the perception of the Other, a fact that eluded the attention of our author. We have already mentioned Merleau-Ponty, and there are others as well, such as Blanchot, Deleuze, Foucault, Barthes, and Derrida.

D. S. Likhachev, an eminent specialist in the field of ancient Russian literature and culture has given the name "transplantation" to the analogous process of the impact of Byzantium on Rus', a term that takes into account not only the literary tradition, but also iconography and church frescoes:

"Monuments are transplanted onto new ground and continue their own independent lives under new conditions and sometimes in new forms, similar to how a repotted plant begins to live and grow in a new set of conditions."<sup>20</sup>

Far Eastern elements in the art of miniature and ceramics in the post-Mongol period, having once penetrated Iran, were elements of Iranian culture itself, as their reception led to their inclusion into the sphere of the creative imagination of artists. Also, they do not play an active role in the formation of the visual anthropology of Iran, although artists successfully used them for endowing surrounding space with a certain flavor. One could think, following Barry, that artists accepted the artistic elements of Chinese origin as a kind of exoticism, intended to give stylistic sophistication and external uniqueness to space. However, it is not quite that simple. It must be kept in mind that Persian artists used nuances of the Per-

sian language with regard to the word “Chin,” which in a predominant number of cases can be translated only as “China.”

For those fascinated by the Chinese influence in the development of the Persian language and fine arts there is a most amusing trap. There are other meanings for the word “chin,” apart from “China”; in classic Persian literature there is also the connotation of interconnectivity, flexibility (*pich, cham*), ornament (*giri*), or even wave (*mawj*), as well as one more semantic overlap with the word *shikanje* (pain, suffering).<sup>21</sup> Thus, Persian artists used the full possibilities of their tongue for the transferring of those forms, which truly did appear similar to those of Chinese origin. This poetic technique (*‘ilm al-badi*) is called “tajnis-e tam,” when two words coincide in their written form and pronunciation, but differ in meaning. There is also another figure of speech called “iham,” which means one word having two meanings—one more widespread and the other of greater rarity. Persian artists could have used the word “China” (Chinese) in both indicated meanings. Today we do not know which figure artists used, but it is clear that they actively employed the rules and figures of Persian rhetoric.

In the appearance of the linguistic form, which can be taken to mean “China,” and in its corresponding visual forms, hides a distinction that was Persian artists used.<sup>22</sup> It was as if they prepared a riddle (I use the word “riddle” introduced by the author in the title of the book) for simpletons who are taken in by their knowledge of language and art. Similarities are often taken as likenesses. However, in doing so, one cannot forget about the distinctions that lurk within these similarities. Similarities, and not likenesses, are based on distinctions—this is the principle of the relationship of the word to visual forms.

One cannot help but agree with the following words of a specialist in the sphere of Islamic art history and theory:

“One could conclude that Persian painting was an academic art perhaps without a manual or any proclamation of principles, but still with fixed rules accepted by the artists as well as the patrons and everyone interested in art.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Bihzad: Permeability and Partition of the Visual Sphere in Persian Miniature**

Bihzad was born in Herat between the years 1450 and 1460. He lost his parents early in life and was sent to the famous calligraphist Amir Ruh Allah Mirak Harawi for education. Harawi wrote a large number of the calligraphic inscriptions on the architectural buildings of Herat. Bihzad was indebted to him for his mastery over the fine arts of calligraphy and ornamentation, which quickly came to be reflected in his work. This was also during the time of the artist, Mawlana Wali Allah, who taught the painter Mirak the art of illustration and facilitated his promotion to the position of director of the library during the reign of Sultan Hussein Baiqara.

From the inscription on Bihzad's work indicating that he was imitating the work of Mavlana Vali, we understand that his choice was not coincidental. The work of Mavlana Vali had a very strong influence on Bihzad.<sup>24</sup> Bihzad was known for his modesty, his reticence, and his pleasant character in all respects. He never married and led a secluded life. In Herat he lived in a cell in the lodge of the great Sufi Khoja Abdallah Ansari. The modest dress of Bihzad is reflected in the portrait of the artist, done by his student, Mahmud Muzzahib. When Tahmasp, the son of Shah Ismael, brought Bihzad to Tabriz under the Safavids, it is no surprise that he was declared "the friend of God, Favorite of God" (*wali*). The location of his grave is not known for certain; he is either buried in Tabriz near the grave of the famous Iranian poet Kamal-I Hujandi, or in his native Herat.

There are a fairly large number of miniatures signed by Bihzad, although they do not lend themselves to a single stylistic ascription. Thus, only the double frontispiece and four miniatures for the "Bustan" of Sa'adi in the National Library of Cairo are considered absolutely genuine. One can understand Barry when he dedicates his third and fourth chapters to the illustrations of this manuscript, while also addressing miniatures from other manuscripts that belonged to the hand of the master from Herat. All in all, the third chapter is dedicated to the historical and cultural survey of the conditions in which Bihzad worked and lived. The reader has the right to expect that the author will eventually make his way toward an analysis of the distinctive features of Bihzad's style, but, alas, this does not happen.

In the fourth chapter, "Zulaykha's Castle," Barry turns to the miniatures of the "Bustan" manuscript, which was copied by the renowned calligraphist Sultan Ali Mashhadi. The author dedicates several of the first pages of this chapter to attributing the double frontispiece to the painter Mirak. This discovery, however, belongs not to our author, but to A. Soudavar and A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, whose opinions Barry fully shares. Further on, Barry repeats the interesting fact, discovered long before him, that the architectural composition in the scene "The Seduction of Yusuf," is made in accordance with the poetic description of the prominent Herati poet Jami', and not Sa'adi. The chapter concludes with an examination of Jami', and the relationship between the poet's imagery and several major events in the spiritual history of the Mediterranean, including a discussion of Byzantine iconoclasm, the theory of light in the theology of Avicenna and Ibn Arabi, the views of John of Damascus, and so on. The erudition of the author relies on information that has been well known for some time, and it does not bring to light even a word of the plasticity and compositional mastery of Bihzad himself. The spiritual history of the Mediterranean has an extremely refined structure of inter-related events that is impossible to present in the space of a few pages of a book, which, judging by its name, should be about the work of Bihzad.



Bihzad's miniatures deserve a creative response that deals directly with the body of his compositions and a response based on the achievements of contemporary visual analysis. As I conclude my discussion of the appearance of a new type of visual thinking in Herati miniatures of the fifteenth century, I will begin with some examples. It is sufficient to compare two miniatures in order to understand the fundamental elements of the new discourse of visual anthropology. One miniature belongs to Junayd in the "Diwan" of Khwaju Kirmani (British Library, Add. 18113, fol. 26v). It depicts Humay approaching a castle. The other is a view of Khorsow near the castle of Shirin from a Nizami manuscript (beginning of the fifteenth century, Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., 25.70).

The first miniature was made in Baghdad, the second probably in Herat or Tabriz, but what is important here is not the determination of origins, nor the coincidence of the iconographical schema, but rather the predominance of the discourse of the iconosphere and the emphasized verticality, both in the main subject and in the entire miniature. Phenomenologically, the discourse of the "iconosphere" is strengthened in the "topos," the place, which constantly refutes the position of the logos, the word. Iconospheric discourse began in eastern Iranian art precisely when the inscriptions on Samanid ceramics grew into an ornament that was "difficult to read." The new preeminence of the positions of man centeredness in eastern, and only later, western Iran is illustrated by the increase of human figures with Arabic inscriptions on the so-called Bobrinski kettle of 1163 from the Hermitage, as well as by any number of similar metallic objects from the same area.<sup>25</sup> The metallic wares include not only distinct human figures, but also indistinct ones, which significantly broadens the horizons of the visual anthropology of eastern Iran.<sup>26</sup> This, however, is a separate problem, and lies beyond the scope of this essay.

It was only at the turn of the fifteenth century that the constant development of iconospheric discourse took on its final spatial expression, founded on the verticality of both the page itself and the characters of the illustrated narrative. It was precisely the iconosphere that formed the gestalt of eastern Iranian miniature and endowed this space not only with the characteristic traits of *continuity* of space and form, but also with new horizons of perception.

In many places in his book Barry attests to the perception of Herati miniature with the presence of Sufi ideas, but this is clearly insufficient, as far as the depths of perception can in no way be founded on an ideology. Next to the deep discourse of the iconosphere, there also existed a constant interest in the rules of the rhetorical construction of an essentially visually perceived plastic fabric of miniatures.

Before I continue further, I would like to present the words and ideas of the German philosopher Georg Simmel in his small essay "Adventure"<sup>27</sup> and relate

them to the life and work of Bihzad. Simmel compares the work of the artist with an island, not with a continent, because an island defines its own beginning and end in accordance with its own formative powers, unlike part of a continent, which is dependent on various external forces. This is why the metaphor of the artist's "adventure" has not a mechanical, but an organic character; it defines the spatial forms of his work and also takes into account the dynamic forces of his inner life. The "adventure" does not end because something else begins; its temporal form is the complete expression of its inner meaning. The essence of an artistic work lies in the fact that it singles out a certain segment from an infinite number of continuous moments of contemplation and experience, and liberates it from any connection with that which surrounds it on either side. The artist then gives this substance a self-sufficient form, as if it had been defined and held by an inner center. What the work of art and "the adventure" have in common is that they, as a *part* of existence, enter into the continuity of that same existence, while, at the same time, they can also be perceived as a complete, discrete whole.

It almost seems as if these words were directly addressed to Barry, who constantly compares Bihzad's work with that of someone else. The object of comparison often turns out to be European artists of various times, right up until the current day. One cannot compare one thing with another just because it seems suitable at the present moment. After all, comparison is particularly axiological, and emotions are a poor ally when it comes to analysis. Barry confuses rules of association with rules of conceptual organization. Georg Simmel justifiably speaks of the factor of discreteness in art, if only because the spatial forms of each artist are self-sufficient and self-contained. A different matter altogether is the conceptual approach to making comparisons, which can bring to light the hidden ontological meanings of works from two or more artists from various eras. At the same time, the self-sufficiency of the work of a master can extend itself to the entire spectrum of the work of others within an originally given visual discourse. Such was Bihzad, who opened for his students and successors new horizons for the representation of people.

Bihzad's task consisted in having to work through and overcome the iconosphere in miniature that preceded him. What does this mean? Having completely mastered the illustrative space before him, he began to work through the visual environment of miniatures, expressing them with continuity of design and corporeality. The fact is Bihzad was not satisfied with the perception of space of action; he breaks through it, dragging the space of the miniature into its own self-sufficient, continual, and holistic environment.<sup>28</sup> However, it is opposed to that environment of the world in which we live, and, as Gibson notes, art and architecture differ in one particular way. This environment within a separate work of

art or architecture is composed of disparate yet nonetheless interrelated spatial zones. The work of art or architecture is defined not only by the number of different spaces present. Of extreme importance is the continuity of these spatial zones, each of which enter into the characteristic environment of each monument.

The two significant aspects of this environment are permeability and partitionality, which are structurally tied to Bihzad's architectural space in his miniatures for Saadi's "Bustan." These include all illustrations except the second miniature, *King Darius and Herdsman*. The visual environment must be permeable; with the appearance of transparent window openings (apertures) in the architectural spaces or open doors or gates, verticality in the depicted space of miniatures is asserted. Partitions in Bihzad's compositions and in those after him were made of permeable wooden constructions. The permeability and openness of the illustrated environment, and not simply the spaces themselves, have a clear conceptual charge to them, including, as is already well known, both obsolete and new images, as well as compositional schemes.

The first to pay attention to the conceptual meaning of "style of partitions" was Walter Benjamin.<sup>29</sup> Benjamin spoke of the birth of the French bourgeoisie in the middle of the eighteenth century and of the appearance in their lives of a fascination with all sorts of small boxes and carrying cases for slippers, thermometers, and pocket watches. However, in Herat during the fifteenth century this was all much more serious. The appearance of a new discourse of a permeable environment demanded a corresponding response in the displacement of the laws of compositional construction. Bihzad was the first to do this.

The appearance of new depictive motifs and characters in Persian miniatures demanded defined rules for integrating discrete parts into a united whole. With this goal in mind, artists worked out the compositional device of partition spaces. This had several consequences: First, instead of being a simple interpreter of the text, the artist became a master of improvisation. Second, a particular kind of mastery was demanded under these conditions, inasmuch as any flaw in the picture, composition, or interactions of colors would be much more apparent than it would have been previously. Third, the work of the artist demanded an exceptional understanding of the architectural principles of proportion and construction, even in the case of illustrating architectural structures of only two or three stories.

The epitome of the inimitable organization of partitioned space in the Herati and later miniatures is the final miniature to the "Bustan" manuscript, *Zulayka Seduces Joseph*. The entire composition is broken up into a row of independent and impermeable microspaces. This is demanded by the reckless nature of the poetic subject; the seduction of Joseph must take place without witnesses. Bihzad arrives



at the construction of a staircase piercing all three floors of the architectural structure, in order to create continuity of composition and wholeness.

Shortly before Bihzad, the great architect Qawam al-Din Shirazi resorts to a similar “style of partition.” He finally canonizes the vaulted system of architectural structures, breaking up the hitherto monolithic *trompe l’oeil* into a multitude of smaller, intersecting spatial sails (squinch-net vaulting), based on intersecting weighted arches. In creating the arched system, the architect used brickwork, which allowed the curvature to remain, as the refraction along the sails’ axes of any complexity. The shield sails form a single plastic whole for going toward the cupola at the juncture of intersections from the curved arcs. The experiments in architectural partition in the arcs of Herat and Meshhed were examples for Bihzad and provided an environment that could not but help serve as the “exquisite” and conceptual basis for his own work.

It was precisely Qawam al-Din Shirazi who demonstrated that details of construction, especially intersecting vaults, must respond to the general ornamental program of Timurid architecture. Bihzad remembered this rule well.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the ornamentation of architectural compositions in the “Bustan” miniatures, he introduces his own signature as an ornament. As such, the signature enters the context of a particular conceptual character of the “ornamental gestalt,” which was discussed by A. Riegl.<sup>31</sup> As was shown by the founders of gestalt theory, thought-forms must resonate and respond to things parallel to themselves, as we can observe in the architectural compositions of Bihzad. Bihzad’s signature clearly resonates in relation to the extant architectural practice, as it is draped in “ornamental gestalt.” The signature turns out to be a result of attention on the part of the artist toward the ornamental program, which is distinctly apparent when compared to the signatures of the later Safavid period.

When Barry writes of “Islamic architectural decoration” (p. 80), one must point out that he either does not know or does not recall the lessons of Riegl, Sedlmayer, Gombrich, and Grabar. Sedlmayer, in his *Loss of the Middle*, wrote of the death of the ornament in the new time and its transformation into a soulless decoration. An ornament is not a sign of something, it does not indicate, it argues with nothing and disputes nothing. An ornament is what it is, correctly notes Oleg Grabar in his remarkable book on the ornament, clearly showing, how the ornament differs from decoration.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Genre of the Portrait**

The name of Bihzad is usually associated with the origin of portraiture in Herat. Inscriptions with the name of Bihzad are found in a large number of portrait illustrations, although researchers have correctly questioned whether they are,

in fact, his work. The famed figure of Bihzad may have been used to justify works that do not correspond to the mastery and talent of the artist. I now turn the attention of the reader to which, if we limit ourselves to portraiture, is the most striking portrait.

For a long time many have associated the very idea of portraiture with the corresponding works of the famous Venetian Gentile Bellini in Istanbul, where he traveled by invitation of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror and drew his portrait. Bellini did not limit himself to the portrait of the sultan, and made one more portrait of a young scribe at work. Barry (pp. 33734) lays out one version, the idea being that iconographic copies of Bellini's portrait with the depiction of the young scribe were distributed throughout the entire Irano-Indic artistic world. There are, however, reasons for attributing this illustration to the hand of Ibn Mu'adhdhin, the Arabicized name of another Italian artist by the name of Constanzo de Ferrara.<sup>33</sup> However, as Barry contests, Bihzad himself saw the portrait of the Venetian master. All these conditions serve as apparent cause for our author to give to tradition that which it is owed—to agree with Bihzad's authorship of the brilliant portrait of a young artist from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Even if Bellini could have actually painted from a model and it was truly a portrait, nevertheless, in the case of Bihzad there can be no such certainty. If the person whose portrait is being taken is absent, and the artist, at his own fear and risk, composes the illustration of a person, then this is hardly a portrait.

The Herati artist was of a different school; his relationship to models was different than that of European artists. If Bihzad's experiment can be called a portrait, then it can be called so only conditionally, inasmuch as the method of his creative relationship to reality (whether it be text or a real person) was devoted not to the assimilation of, but to the individualization of the model. The metaphorical thought of Bihzad and artists of his time did not allow him to stop at the concept of a "likeness." Difference in similarity is the guiding star of the culture in which Bihzad grew.

However, it is difficult to take issue with Barry's conclusion since the level of execution in the last portrait is so high. Indeed, few artists besides Bihzad could have created the very best portrait in Iranian miniatures anonymously. It might be worthwhile to accept Bihzad's authorship conditionally. However, too little is said to understand the reasons why Bihzad (or anyone else from the Herati circle of miniaturists) would turn to the very process of portraiture. At the time this work was made, Bihzad was so refined and serious, that such a step would require extremely important conditions. We will return to those conditions shortly.

The conceptual foundations of permeability and partitionality in Herati miniatures facilitate the appearance of individualized characteristics of people,

inhabitants of separate spatial cells. Iranian artists, even before Herati miniatures, mastered the ability of portraying, as a rule, generalized, typified facial features. The task of illustrating a plot did not demand that attention be given to the individual characteristics of the figures' faces. The artist's primary concern was always the plot of the text. It is only when miniature illustrations take up practically an entire page and are broken up into separate microcosms that the question of the necessity of detailed faces arises. It is as if individualized space itself invites the artist to individualize the faces and clothing of characters. One is impossible without the other. This must be understood, as the problem of the influence of individual people (Bellini, the Ottoman experiment) on Herati painting has not been completely proven. Within the depths of miniature itself, the necessary congruencies for the appearance of illustrations of "likeness" were already coming together.

Bihzad's attempt at declaring a new artistic discourse in his illustrations to Saadi's "Bustan" and the examined miniatures from other manuscripts allowed him to pose the question of new horizons for the formation of visual anthropology. When portraiture appeared in Istanbul, Bihzad and his students were completely prepared to perceive this historical fact not by itself, but rather to integrate it into an already prepared discourse. This is why portraits faithful to the principle of "similar images" (*surat-i shabih*) would continue to appear occasionally in Safavid miniatures. These were images of likenesses, images that relied on a sufficient correspondence between that which was being depicted and the depiction itself. Finally, instead of differentiation in Iranian miniature, there appears likeness.

Safavid miniatures remained within the borders of the same visual discourse and the same visual anthropology that had been started by Bihzad. Safavid miniatures could offer nothing that had not already been established by the great Herati master and his students. Miniature during the Safavid dynasty could not even replicate the architectural plastics that had been constructed by Bihzad. I would call Safavid miniature a great simulacra; it could not in full measure develop the lessons of the Herati school in the spheres of spatial construction and in the adaptation of the visual environment, leaving preeminence in this to the Herati circle. The only thing that the Safavids succeeded in accomplishing was to continue the discourse of the iconosphere, in which Bihzad, fortunately, refused to participate. We know what this resulted in the appearance of a multitude of portraits, the infiltration of western European subjects and stylistics, and the successful spread of photographs that replaced the miniature portrait. And, finally, there appeared the easel-based portraiture of the Qajar dynasty.

The loss of that very pictorial system should be mentioned; at "the holy place" there appeared a mask, like the remnants of something passed, like something left over and historically prior, but now more vital. From this time onward it was not



the image itself that was named, but only that which was depicted on the paper, cardboard, or fresco. It was precisely the ideological state of affairs that led to the presentation of the parade portrait of the Qadjars, as well as to the miniature portraits that were ordered before that time. Dress and likeness to reality became much more important than the view through the image or around the image. Once more, the origin of this process goes back to Bihzad, although he himself had no relation to it.

Thus, Bihzad stood at the sunset of the incomparable tradition of Persian miniatures. Safavid artists could not support Bihzad in his constant innovations; the splendor of Safavid miniatures was simply splendor, and nothing more. It is paradoxical, but Bihzad conclusively summed up the entire evolution of painting that existed before him. In this sense, he can be compared to 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, who lived in Herat at the same time. Jami was the last member of the pleiad of great Persian language poets beginning with Rudaki. There were certainly good poets later; in the Safavid era there were very good artists. But such titans of poetry and miniature were no longer to be found.

It would seem that Barry's book was not intended as an academic work. It does not even display incursions into the depths of Persian miniature painting. The author is completely helpless when it comes to art theory, perception theory, medieval rules of rhetoric, and contemporary visual poetics. This is immediately apparent in his understanding of the history of art in Iran, as well as in his understanding of the history of contemporary art. Art history as a whole cannot be understood without any knowledge of philosophical theories of art. Barry's book is aimed at the lay reader, whom he often misleads as to the foundations of the visual culture of the Iranians of Greater Khorasan and Iran itself. Direct references to works done by others in the field are absent, which may give the lay reader the impression that the author is doing original work. The formal quality and beauty of the book on the level of design do not succeed in hiding all of its faults, which are obvious to a reader with even a limited amount of knowledge about Iranian art history in particular and art theory in general. Apparently, this is the only reason why this book is sold in many museum shops, leaving more serious investigations into the art and architecture of Iran neglected.

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## NOTES

1. A. Bahari, *Bihzad: Master of Persian Painting* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1996).
2. Michael A. Barry, *Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the Riddle of Bihzād of Herat (1465–1535)*, (Paris: Flammarion, 2004).
3. These tasks are listed in the last chapter of Oleg Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures: An Introduction to Persian Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
4. Bahari, *Master of Persian Painting*, 219–30.
5. In my understanding the terminological expression “visual anthropology” is aimed at drawing out the rules of organization not only of the represented object, but also of the immanent subject. For this reason the goal of contemporary visual poetics is not merely the interrelationship between text and illustration, but something more that composes its own discourse, composed from both poetry and illustration. It would be interesting to compare the Persian exercise with the slogan of the Dadaists, pictopoésie: “La Pictopoésie n’est pas Peinture / La Pictopoésie n’est pas Poésie / Pictopoésie est Pictopoésie.” *DADA: Catalogue publié sous la direction de Laurent Le Bon à l’occasion de l’exposition DADA présentée au Centre Pompidou* (Paris, 2006), 75.
6. Iranians use two types of metaphor (*majāz*, *isti’āra*). See Rashīd an-Dīn Watwāt, *Hadā’iq as-sihr fī daqā’iq ash-shi’r* (Tehran, n.d.).
7. “The essence of rhetoric consists of endowing a word with the status of preparedness, canonically defined and confirmed.” The expression “ready-made word” was introduced by A. V. Mikhailow, the prominent Russian specialist in Western European art and poetics, introduced the expression “ready-made word.” S. S. Averintsev, Mikhailow’s colleague and one of the “masters of the mind” of Russian intellectualism, further developed the idea. Thanks to these two scholars, the problems of rhetoric and poetics were posed at an extremely high theoretical level in Russia in the 1960s. As a result of the closed nature of the country, several books, not to mention numerous articles, on the theoretical tendencies of Ancient Greece, the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the modern age did not find many readers in the West.
8. M. Khalafallah, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Ilm al-Badi.
9. Abu Hāmid Imām Muhammad Ghazālī, *Kīmīya-yi Sa’ādat* (Tehran, 1354) 1:XLVI.
10. See: Richard Ettinghausen, “Al-Gazzali on Beauty” in *Art and Thought, issued in Honour of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswami*, ed. K. Bharatha Iyer (London: Luzac, 1947).
11. See T. Fitzherbert, “Themes and Images on the Animate Buff Ware of Medieval Nishapur” (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford, 1983), 29–33. H. Corbin wrote about chevalerie spirituelle and *Javanmardi*. See *En Islam iranienne* (Paris, 1972), 4:409–20). Corbin writes about the Abrahamic tradition of chivalry (tradition abrahamique), by which he means jawānmardi. I am referring to the ethnic discourse of real Samanid chivalry. What these two authors write on the topic is accurate, however; it is not sufficient for the particular conditions of Samanid Iran or for understanding the theoretical foundations of ceramics of this period.
12. See J. C. Coyajee, *Studies in Shahname* (Bombay, 1939).
13. An extremely broad characterization of ceramics of this period, as well as a good number of illustrations, can be found in Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, and

Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 116–20.

14. Asadullah S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World: 8–18TH Centuries* (London: HMSO, 1982), 145, fig. 50A; figs. 147 and 53.
15. See Sharif Shukurov, “The Perfect Man and God, human Idea in Islam,” in *The Perfect Man: Theology and Philosophy of Image* (Moscow, 1997), 106–108.
16. See Sharif Shukurov, *Imago Templi* (Moscow, 2002).
17. For a similar typology of literature and visual discourses, see M. Swietochowski, “The Development of Traditions of Book Illustration in Pre-Safavid Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974).
18. René Grousset, *La Chine et son art* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1951).
19. What the author intends by the expression “neoplatonic style” is completely inscrutable. First of all, the word “style” is hardly apropos. Secondly, Sufism, from the outside, can appear to be similar to Neoplatonic teachings. However, this is not really the case, as Sufism is the inner spiritual dimension of Islam, remaining, flesh of one’s flesh, a part of the Abrahamic tradition. This expression can be found in several places in Barry’s work, which disorients the unprepared reader, leading him into a vicious circle of distorted representations of Sufism and Herati spiritual culture of the fifteenth century.
20. D. S. Likhachev, *Razvitia russkoi literatury X–XVII vekov* (Leningrad, 1973), 22.
21. The final definition is given by the Persian dictionary *Burhān-e Qāte’* (Tehran, 1341), 410.
22. There are, however, cases where Iranians themselves attributed certain compositions to the Chinese, even though they were undoubtedly Persian. See D. J. Roxburgh, “Disorderly Conduct? F. R. Martin and the Bahram Mirza Album,” *Muqarnas* 15 (1998): 40.
23. Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, 140.
24. Much has been written on Behzad’s teachers and the creative atmosphere of his era. For one of the latest studies, see Bahari, *E. Bihzad*, 35–43 and later. For contemporary information about the author and the conditions he worked in, see P. Soucek, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Bihzad, 114–16.
25. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, 67, fig. 35; 71, fig. 41; 141, fig. 49.
26. *Ibid.*, 57, fig. 13.
27. See the Russian edition, Георг Зиммель, *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1996), 212–26.
28. On the concept of environment, see J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (New York, 1979). By “environment,” we mean the totality of the mental and material world of Iranian art and architecture. For the world of art, the concept of environment includes the material world of images as well as the color and technological accompaniments to this world. However, this is also not enough inasmuch as environment organically includes accompanying represented images of a non-visual nature: myths, rituals, poetic images, and literary and historical information. It is a stream of information out of which a discrete work of art gains its visual structure.
29. W. Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIX-e siècle. Le Livre des Passages*. (Paris, 2002), 247–404.
30. Bernard O’Kane, in a book on Timurid architecture, refers to miniature, including Behzad’s architectural compositions. See “Building of the Castle Khawarnaw,” in *Zafar-nama* (Mesa: Timurid Architecture Khurasan, 1987), 42–43.
31. A. Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, annotated by David Castriota (Princeton, 1992) and P. Crowther, “More than Ornament: The Significance of Riegl,” *Art History* 17 (1994).
32. Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton, 1998).
33. See Roxburgh, *Disorderly Conduct*, 39–40. This is located in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, where the author of the piece is unreservedly declared to Bellini.
34. Freer Gallery of Art (33.28). This work had a multitude of literal and free imitations. The Russian State Museum of the People of the East has one such miniature from the Safavid period.



## The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra

By Ebba Koch. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2006. 288 pages, 378 illustrations (224 color). \$75, hard cover.

IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT to know what lurks below the cover of Thames and Hudson's books. All are beautifully laid out, printed in luscious color, and filled to overflowing with beautiful imagery; yet, between books of largely similar exterior form and production values, there are often stunning differences in terms of scholarly content and therefore audience. If the current volume superficially resembles George Michell's *The Majesty of Mughal Decoration* by the same publisher (see review in this volume), the difference in content could not be greater. Whereas the latter is largely a collection of beautiful images paired with a general introductory text for nonspecialists, the cover of Ebba Koch's *The Complete Taj Mahal* arguably hides the single most important study of an Islamic monument in India ever to be published, not to mention the definitive study of the Taj Mahal. Behind the overly populist title and the release literature's promise of a study of the "greatest monument to love," lies a work of the depth, sophistication, and thoroughness that we have come to expect from Ebba Koch. This is a scholarly work that marks the culmination of more than thirty years of research by the author on Mughal architecture and, more specifically, into the Taj Mahal and the wider historical geography of Agra. As the second part of the title indicates, the book is also an important study of the Taj's place within the larger urban context of Agra. Many sections of the book incorporate material from articles and book chapters that Koch had published earlier (her list of publications in the bibliography at the end gives a good idea of that material), but it is not a simple pasting together of already published material, it is instead a coherent and mature biography of the most famous of Indian monuments. Throughout the book the text successfully balances accessibility and clarity with scholarly rigor. The text has full endnotes, a complete and well-organized index, and an extensive "select" bibliography that includes primary sources in Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Arabic, and Sanskrit, as well as early European sources. The book has 378 illustrations, of which 224 are in color, and the author took many of the photographs herself. Alongside her photographs are extensive historical photographs, sketches, paintings, and maps as well as ground plans and abundant images of comparative material.

The book opens with an introduction to the Mughal dynasty and to Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal in particular. Its first chapter is entirely devoted to the urban topography of Agra and the development of the Jumna riverfront, including a complete reconstruction of both banks. It is wonderful to see this section illustrated with so many close-up details of the early eighteenth-century Jaipur map that has provided one of the main sources for this reconstruction, together with numerous early sketches and photographs of the riverfront buildings. Chapter two largely focuses on the architects, construction, and design of the Taj Mahal but it also provides useful discussions of the legality of mausoleum construction in Islam as well

as accounts of the burials and later *urs* celebrations (yearly commemorations of the date of death) for both Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan. Chapter three is devoted to describing and documenting the various parts of this enormous funerary complex; entitled “More than a Tomb” the bulk of the chapter is structured as a walk through the complex from the *Jilaukhana* or forecourt, where visitors traditionally enter the complex, through to the Taj Ganj bazaar and caravanserai and the buildings outside the main perimeter wall. However, the chapter opens with a continuation of chapter two, exploring Shah Jahani principles of design and the modular planning of the Taj complex. A discussion of the modular planning of the Taj Mahal by the architect Richard André Barraud, Koch’s main collaborator in the survey of the complex, is also included in this section. As the flyleaf makes clear, Koch is the first Western scholar since Indian independence to obtain permission to measure the complex and this important empirical aspect of her work is justly highlighted here. However, it might have been more logical to include the detailed measurements of the complex—currently given in the appendix at the end of the book—directly after Barraud’s analysis where it more rightly belongs. Chapter four is devoted to discussions of the symbolism of the complex as the queen’s “paradisiacal house” and explores the way that this meaning is carried through the color, decoration, and program of inscriptions of the building. In this section, the author resolutely rejects Begely’s earlier suggestion that the Taj Mahal symbolized the throne of God. The final chapter is titled “Everybody’s Taj Mahal,” and explores the later history and accrued meanings of the monument, from the early accounts of travelers, via the colonial period and the creation of the Taj as a “monument to love,” through its contemporary position as a major tourist attraction and UNESCO World Heritage Site. This concluding chapter also nicely follows up the contemporary conservation problems that the mythical status of the Taj presents, although it diplomatically avoids any mention of the “Taj Corridor Project” and the furor it raised. The concluding pages include, besides the notes, index, and select bibliography already mentioned, a map of Mughal India, a glossary, and a full translation of the account of the complex on the occasion of the twelfth anniversary or *urs* of Mumtaz Mahal’s death by the court historian Lahauri.

There is no doubt that Thames and Hudson have targeted more than an academic audience with this book. The title and chapter headings all aim at easy intelligibility and the “analytical walk” format of the tour in chapter three follows what will be most people’s experience of visiting the complex as modern tourists. The postscript on “Visiting the Taj” (p. 254) is openly aimed at such readership. Academic conventions have naturally been minimized: Lahauri’s account and other primary sources are given only in their English translations, although it is good to see that many non-English terms have been retained in a simplified trans-

literation. Nonspecialists will learn a great deal from the chapters, and the extensive quotes from contemporary sources, particularly poems, bring the monument and its setting to life in a way that everyone can appreciate. Every reader will delight in the book's lush photography, extensive plans, and numerous historical sketches and photographs, but it remains nonetheless a profoundly scholarly work. The pages of detailed documentation and reconstruction of the structures along the Agra riverfront, the documentation of every minute corner of this vast complex, or the constructional and conservation details given in other chapters are very much aimed at specialists. Nevertheless, the demands of both readerships are well balanced, and the book is one of the more successful examples of this type of compromise. The title, *The Complete Taj Mahal*, still jars me slightly even after reading the book—the “complete” of the title brings to mind too many forgettable “how to” or “self-help” books—so I can only hope that it attracts the wide audience that Thames and Hudson clearly hoped it would. But I can at least commend this title for doing exactly what it says: This is the most comprehensive and thorough study of the Taj Mahal complex and its environs ever undertaken and a fitting outcome for thirty years of research. This book is an essential purchase for any art historian or historian with even a remote interest in South Asian or Islamic art and architecture.

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## The Majesty of Mughal Decoration: The Art and Architecture of Islamic India

*By George Michell. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007. 288 pages, 300 color illustrations. \$65, hard cover.*

*THE MAJESTY OF MUGHAL DECORATION* is well described in the accompanying release literature as a collection of the “hallmarks of Mughal style” illustrated with “stunning color illustrations and a series of dazzling gatefolds.” Throughout these 288 pages, the key themes of Mughal decoration are lavishly illustrated with examples taken from architectural decoration and a wide range of artifacts, including the arts of the book, furniture, carpets and textiles, ceramics and glass, metalwork, arms and armor, coins, gems, and jewelry. Text is kept to a minimum, with only twenty-four full text pages, all unreferenced. It is essentially through its numerous and opulent images that this volume presents Mughal decoration to its viewership. The images in this book are expertly photographed, the color printing is luscious, and the volume as a whole is beautifully laid out. Needless to say, this book is not an academic publication—and I am certain that its author would not begrudge me this statement—however, it is a pure visual delight and in this it achieves its stated aim perfectly.

The volume opens with accessibly written introductions to the Mughals as patrons, to their artistic sources and influences, and to the materials and techniques of Mughal architectural decoration and the applied arts. The main body of the volume is divided into a short “color portfolio” that analyzes Mughal decoration in terms of colors and their combinations, for example “Imperial red” or “green and blue on white,” and then into the key “themes” of Mughal decoration, classified here under the five headings of geometry, arabesque, calligraphy, flowers, and animals and birds. A “documentation” section at the end includes a short catalogue providing basic data on the one hundred key artifacts and twelve sites represented here, as well as a general bibliography. The selected monuments and artifacts include all the great Mughal places and pieces, from Fatehpur Sikri to the Taj Mahal, from the *Anwar-i Suhayli* from the Prince of Wales Museum collection to Shah Jahan’s jade drinking cup in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but it is also gratifying to find a good range of later Mughal and Mughal-inspired artifacts as well. The flyleaf of *The Majesty of Mughal Decoration* boasts that the volume contains “over 300 illustrations in color”—a phrase that almost suggests that the publisher simply lost count—and I was indeed dazzled and stunned by their number and, above all, their quality. There is not a single black-and-white photograph here, even though it might have been helpful to include ground plans and city maps to locate some of the structures and architectural detail with more precision. The “color portfolio” and the organization of the decoration into “themes” suggest that this volume was produced with designers and design students as a primary audience, and recent reviews in magazines such as *House and Garden* and *The World of Interiors* seem to bear this out. It would be easy to classify this book simply as a coffee table volume, but I think that the quality of the close-up photog-

raphy and the extraordinary scale of the enlargements also make this a valuable volume for teachers of South Asian and Islamic art.

Early in my career I was fortunate to have the opportunity to watch Bruce White over several weeks as he photographed Mughal artifacts at the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait. The experience gave me a new appreciation of the art of such close-up work and its complexity, especially when dealing with raised relief or reflective surfaces. There are too many examples to list individually, but I would single out the close-up of an enameled glass *huqqa* base in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (see p. 222 and cat. 45) in which every bubble within the glass and minute details of the enameler's brushstrokes can be seen. The scale of the enlargements and the quality of the original close-up photography transforms even familiar objects. I was fortunate enough to handle the famous Mughal emerald carved with a landscape of palms that is reproduced on page 213 (cat. 47) but even with a magnifying glass I was barely able to see the detail of carving and the qualities of the stone that emerge through this photograph. There are few photographs to find fault with here but the reflection of the photographer and his studio in the glass *huqqa* base from the Bharat Kala Bhavan in Varanasi (p. 223, cat. 46) is a classic example of the pitfalls of photographing such objects. That this is the only example I could find in more than 300 illustrations is a testament to the sensitivity of the many photographers involved in this project, as well as to the critical eye of the author and editor. The photography of the architectural decoration is equally stunning and I can only wonder at the time and effort involved in arranging permits and access to these monuments, not to mention the technical hardware (scaffolding and lighting) needed to produce such perfectly lit and clear images. I was especially happy to see Malcolm Hutcheson's photography of Mughal monuments in Lahore, which has produced some beautiful close-ups of the comparatively inaccessible exterior mosaics of the fort (pp. 888–89, 122–23, 236–37) together with close-ups of the interior architectural decoration of several key monuments in the city (pp. 87, 90–91, 92–93, 102–103, 146–47, 184–85, 204–205).

Photographic work of this quality certainly deserves appreciation but I would also like to make the more serious point that it provides a level of visual access that is often impossible for students and is difficult even for specialists in the field. Those hardened by fieldwork and museum visits in South Asia will appreciate the infinite bureaucratic and practical hurdles that stand between the researcher and their monument or artifact. Even for objects housed in Western museums, handling for students is notoriously complex to arrange. Survey books on Islamic and South Asian art are generally sparsely illustrated, usually with small black-and-white images that are more mental reminders of the object or building than usable images. A book such as this is the perfect accompaniment to such survey works.

The accessible and easy to read text repeats and consolidates information about the basic historical and cultural background while the superb images will engage students in a way that is rarely possible without actually “being there.” Although a book can never re-create the full sensory range of physical presence in a building or the handling of an object, the quality of these images offers the viewer an almost hyperreal encounter with Mughal decoration. I use the term “hyperreal” because the size and quality of the enlargements gives better detail than is possible with the naked eye under normal lighting conditions. In all these images, the colors, textures, and manipulation of the various materials come to life in a quite remarkable way. In my experience, this sensory foundation is one of the best bases upon which to build a more intellectual engagement.

The present volume aptly bears out Thames and Hudson’s claim to be “the most eminent publisher of illustrated books in the world,” publishing “high-quality, beautifully printed books.” In spite of its “coffee-table” appearance, I would recommend *The Majesty of Mughal Decoration* as a useful addition to any general design library and particularly as a valuable teaching aid at the undergraduate level.

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## The Divine Nature of Power: Chinese Ritual Architecture at the Sacred Site of Jinci

*By Tracy Miller. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2007. 265 pages, 62 illustrations (40 color). \$45.00, hardcover.*

SACRED ARCHITECTURE THE WORLD OVER is often symbolic of power greater and higher than humankind. Through excellent craftsmanship, embellished materials, and monumental conception, a sacred building represents for its patrons and devotees much more than the building itself. The way in which a building is symbolic of the sacred is through the construction of its meaning with patronage, building history, ritual pattern, decorative schema in relation to the architectonic form, and iconographic program. In the case of sacred architecture in China, this relationship is often compounded by both the nature of religion and the craft-based Chinese architectural tradition, which has contributed to a multivalent reading of the meaning of religious expression and its architecture.

A case in point is the subject of this book: the ritual buildings at Jinci complex south of Taiyuan, the provincial capital of Shanxi province. Jinci has often been described as an important example of religious buildings located in a natural setting and serving a popular religion of the region. In more recent publications on Chinese architecture history, Jinci is classified under the category of temples and ritual halls, which includes examples such as imperial ritual buildings, Confucian temples, and temples dedicated to local or vernacular deities. These structures are categorized differently from Buddhist and Daoist buildings, indicating that most Chinese scholars regard them as ritual buildings serving the “state or popular religion.” This grossly simplistic reading of the nature of the buildings at Jinci is a result of the lack of attempts in the past to pursue serious study of Jinci in relation to its long and varied history.

Tracy Miller’s book attempts to do just that. She explicitly states that: “The placement of worship halls in a landscape deemed to be sacred, and their orientation and organization into building complexes, directly expressed the beliefs of the people responsible for their creation and maintenance.” (p. 1) Can this lofty aim be achieved? Miller demonstrates that with a careful combing of both the textual and physical evidence analyzed within a socioreligious context, we can obtain a fascinating perspective on the buildings that is dynamic and meaningful. In fact, the book has turned our understanding of Jinci, and by extension, other sacred complexes with a long history in China, into three-dimensional constructs that intersect the building form with the history of patronage, appropriation, and ritual constructions.

The book begins with background materials relating to Jinci, including early forms of the temple, methodology adopted in the study of Jinci, the geography of the site, and a brief history of each building (chapters one and two). It follows with the history of the site and the patronage pattern of the buildings between the Western Zhou period (11TH century BCE–771 BCE) and the Qing dynasty (1644–

1911; chapters three to seven), placing emphasis on the Northern Song period when the oldest extant building is dated and the Qing dynasty when a significant reattribution of the site occurred. The last section (chapter eight) contains a discussion on the meaning of the Jinci complex. The chronological treatment of the book allows readers to follow a clear structure and enhances the understanding of the changing meaning of a sacred complex as its pattern of worship and patronage develop. While most authors would only take a snapshot of the history of a building and present the most salient feature of its significance, Miller has succeeded in presenting a dynamic process through which different factors shaped the perception and meaning of a building.

Miller is concerned with two aspects of the buildings at Jinci: the identification of the main deities worshiped at the site and the process of appropriation among the local people, officials, and neo-Confucianists. With thorough investigation and the clever use of diverse source materials, Miller demonstrates convincingly that the site at Jinci was variously interpreted as the center of the fiefdom of Shu Yu of Tang, the spring that feeds water guarded by a water deity worshiped at the site, and the deity regarded as the mother of Shu Yu.

Jinci as the site of the worship of Shu Yu is substantiated by textual and archaeological evidence, as narrated in chapters 3 and 4 of the book. Based on textual evidence, Miller tries to establish the connection between Shu Yu, the second son of King Wu of Zhou (the founder of the Zhou dynasty), and the site at one of the sources of Jin water where Shu Yu's son relocated the capital of the Jin state. Archaeological evidence is then used to show that the capital is indeed located near the Jinci site. While the founding of the Jin state and the location of its capital city is shrouded in the long history and is rather convoluted, this comprehensive investigation into the history and architecture of the shrine has revealed that the cult of Shu Yu was later supported by the imperial households of the Tang and Song dynasties, resulting in great temple complexes at the site of Jinci. This is a good illustration of the way in which the cult of a deified historical person was promoted and sustained by the imperial patronage and possibly with the staunch support of the local elite community. It is hard to conceive how the cult of Shu Yu was maintained for such a long time considering that he was one of the many feudal lords of the early Zhou dynasty, living more than 1300 years before the first written record of the shrine with no particular historical act to support his elevation to a deity. Miller provides the convincing answer by suggesting that Shu Yu was symbolic of the military and political successes of two emperors of the Tang and Song dynasties. The imperial patronage also explains why the temple of this ancestral spirit was built to what is described as a grandiose scale. However, it is difficult to ascertain the size and scale of

the original buildings erected for the worship of Shu Yu simply through textual records. Drawings or graphic records and archaeological evidence would have been very useful supplements here.

The most interesting section of the book is the examination of the history and buildings of the cult of the Sage Mother, the water deity. Miller charts the development of the cult at the site to the point when the water deity was elevated to the position of Sage Mother during the Song dynasty, when the extant grand building was built. The same phenomenon can be seen in the elevation of many female deities of the time, such as the Azure Mist Primordial Mother of Mount Tai in Shandong province and the Heavenly Consort of Fujian Province. Because of this raised status, a grand hall was built for the water deity, and Miller suggests that after the earthquake of 1102, the state is said to have sponsored the rebuilding of the hall. However, unlike the other elevated female deities of the period, the Sage Mother was essentially a local deity, and the spread of her worship, both during the Song and down to the Qing, must have been very restrictive to the vicinity of Taiyuan. It would be interesting to uncover why a local deity would attract imperial patronage on such a grand scale?

Miller devotes a whole chapter to discussing the Song and Yuan dynasty architecture of Jinci, in which she dates the hall by looking at several elements of the structural system. This follows closely the method of dating that was first suggested by the father of Chinese architectural history, Liang Sicheng. The system involves looking at the structural system of the extant building and comparing it with the construction method as spelled out in the imperial construction manual, the *Yingzao Fashi* (1103), as well as several extant halls of the same period. Miller compares the architecture of this hall to a few wooden halls of the same period in Shanxi and Hebei provinces that are much smaller than the Sage Mother Hall in Jinci. As far as the genre of the architecture is concerned, some temples of local deities who had received imperial recognition, such as the temples of Tianhou (the Goddess of Heaven) in Quanzhou or Bao'an in Shenzhen, have or had main halls of five bays and are relatively large. Other than these, there are very few temples or halls of vernacular deities that equal the size of the Sage Mother Hall. The complex at Jinci should, therefore, be seen as a special case, and at least among extant structures of the same period, a unique design in many ways considering its structure and layout. In this light, the question to be answered is why is the complex at Jinci so special and different? Is it because of imperial patronage or because of the special connection the site had to the Song ruling house? Could it also relate to the lavish local patronage or the strategic location of the watercourse?

The architecture of Sage Mother Hall is one of the best examples of wooden buildings extant from the Song dynasty. Apart from describing the architecture for



the purpose of dating the building, it would be essential for Miller to highlight the significance of the architecture among the extant examples. It would also be helpful to discuss the possibility of a local carpentry tradition seen in the extant Song dynasty buildings of Shanxi province, rather than comparing the Sage Mother Hall to the Imperial Construction Manual solely. Following the discussion on the architecture of the hall, Miller also describes the statuary and wall painting in the hall, suggesting that the hall had always been used for the worship of water deity. Again, comparison with other statuary and wall paintings of the same period yielded the conclusion that the examples at Jinci must have been among the best extant examples of the genre of the period.

The other buildings on axis with the Sage Mother Hall are interesting for their early dates and rarity of extant examples. They are the Spirit Bridge in front of the hall, which spans over the center of the three springs and the offering hall. Despite their important presence in the complex and significant position in the history of Chinese architecture, they received disproportionately little attention in Miller's book. There is perhaps very little textual account of the dating and patronage of the two buildings; however, they suggest a symbolic and ritualistic layout that warrants more substantive discussion. In addition, it would be interesting to understand the ritual that is central to the worship of the Sage Mother, especially in relation to the architecture of the complex.

What is sacred architecture then? Miller has given us a vivid picture of the contestation of local and national powers playing out in the long history of Jinci. From the interpretation of the site to the patronage of the buildings, the history and development of the site is traced meticulously. It is clear that the identity of the deity worshiped at the site was never in doubt in the mind of the local community: the spring goddess who ensured adequate water supply that was central to the agricultural society. The site was embellished when the efficacy of the goddess was demonstrated, and the buildings were erected to celebrate this efficacy. Through the meticulous combing of historical materials, Miller amply illustrates this point, which has never before been attempted in such detail. The idea of the sacred, henceforth, may not reside in the architecture of the site in the final analysis, but in the patronage and process of building up the site, as demonstrated by Miller so comprehensively.

The book is richly illustrated with drawings and photographs of the buildings of Jinci. Although the section dealing with textual sources might seem to require a good grasp of Chinese history and religion, the book is very readable. It serves as a good example of in-depth research into the full context in which the buildings were commissioned, used, and interpreted throughout their historical development.

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## What's the Use of Art?

### Asian Visual and Material Culture in Context

*Edited by Jan Mrázek and Morgan Pitelka. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008. 313 pages, \$58.00.*

THE MAIN TITLE of *What's the Use of Art? Asian Visual and Material Culture in Context* offers the investigative thrust of the book in two ways: as a straightforward query that delves into the function and purpose of art, and as a rhetorical question that confronts a rarified conception of Art (with a capitalized A), which gainsays practical concerns and applications. In this volume, nine authors devote their efforts to addressing the question posed in the title, mainly by contextualizing specific works and types of Asian art. Morgan Pitelka and Jan Mrázek undertake the more abstract and provocative task of critiquing museological and academic handling of Art; they contribute an introduction and conclusion, respectively.

As the subtitle indicates, Asia is the geographical focus of the book, which contains two essays on South Asia, three essays plus the introduction on East Asia, and four essays plus the conclusion on Southeast Asia. Although no collection of essays can claim comprehensive or equal coverage of all Asian cultures and regions, this volume's heavier emphasis on Southeast Asia is a welcome alternative to Sinocentric and Indocentric framings of Asian art. Its concentration on late-twentieth-century to early twenty-first-century art forms without apologia or the insertion of the qualifying term "modern" or "contemporary" in the title also refreshingly defies conventional descriptions of Asian art. Neither geography nor chronology, however, serves as the organizing principle for the essays. Instead, they are grouped under three major thematic headings—"Functions," "Movements," and "Memories"—that encourage the reader to think comparatively across temporal and national-cultural borders (even if the individual essays, with one or two exceptions, do relatively little cultural crossing). The book also compiles a range of ways to define the arts of Asia, through the disciplinary lens and methods of anthropology, archaeology, religion, cultural studies, and art history. I deliberately relegate art history to the last position because *What's the Use of Art* sets out to challenge existing art historical practices that regard artworks as passive objects, by putting forth alternative approaches that emphasize art as active, functional, transformable, and transformative.

Pitelka begins the introduction with two short epigraphs: Benedetto Croce states, "Art cannot be a utilitarian act"; and Sir Herbert Read concurs with, "Art begins where function ends." Pitelka argues that these quotations represent the post-Enlightenment attitude in the West toward art and culture that *What's the Use of Art* refutes. He takes issue with "art history's insistence on the formal beauty and autonomous value of objectified art" (p. 5) and sees a gap "between modern art history's objectification of art works as autonomously knowable things of university beauty and the more complex tale of the cultural context of their production and use" (p. 2). Pitelka's stance bears two separate but related strands of criticism. First, it problematizes the historically specific idea of Art—as an expression of



beauty, a product of creative genius, and the embodiment of universal truths—as a limited and limiting conception that hinders the current, wider definition of art that calls attention to context-specific objects, practices, rituals, and performances. Second, it suggests that this European concept of Art, neither a natural category of human endeavor nor universally applicable across cultures, unfairly diminishes the value and complexities of Asian visual and material culture, much of which, according to Pitelka, is heavily reliant on their function and context for their meaning.

Pitelka supplies a vivid case study that illustrates the primacy of a “contextualist” evaluation of art. He compares the vastly different treatment of two Japanese tea bowls, both black Raku ware, that are stylistically and materially similar. One, given the name Ōguro, is designated Japan’s Important Cultural Property (Jūyō Bunkazai), while the other sits anonymously in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art in the Smithsonian Institution. To Pitelka, what distinguishes them is not their formal attributes but their “context”—the multiple layers of inscribed wooden boxes that contain them. Ōguro is nestled inside box after box that confidently pronounces its pedigree as a bowl once owned by the renowned sixteenth-century tea master Sen no Rikyū and passed down his line of progeny. The Freer bowl, having lost its containers, has no inscription to validate its worth, and therefore has garnered little interest from tea practitioners and art collectors. Yet, interestingly, the same people who are connoisseurs of Raku bowls invoke “formalist” arguments to authenticate pieces, as if their value derives solely from the formal attributes of the objects (such as, shape, color, material, and style); they detect the hand of the Raku master Chōjirō (the Chōjirō touch) only in the pieces that happen to come with the appropriate box inscriptions. Pitelka cites this as a case of circular logic or an instance of contextualist validation masquerading as formalist evaluation.

“Functions,” the first thematic sections, incorporates four essays dealing with works rich in aesthetic qualities as well as ritual and religious meaning. The authors largely bypass a discussion of the former in pursuit of the latter. Robert DeCaroli examines how indigenous populations viewed early figural representation in South Asia, gleaning historical references of human interaction with sculptural imagery from literary and philosophical texts. Stressing that the earliest large-scale images of spirit-deities were not treated as static objects or decoration by their makers and beholders—as suggested by nineteenth-century European scholarship on Indian art—he discovers a remarkably intimate relationship between the image and the divinity it represents. Although images embody but one aspect—the physical form—of the original, “[in] both literary and legal [sources], there is a consistent tendency to credit images with a certain amount of agency” (p. 36). The statues

talk, walk, and even dispense justice; acting as conduits to the intangible, they are regarded as living containers animated by the spirit-deities they depict.

Louise Cort also focuses on religious containers—in her case, disposable earthenware still in use today for offering food or warding off evil at Japanese shrines and temples. It is in the deliberate destruction of these unglazed, hand-shaped vessels, after just one use, that their potency as conveyors of food or messages to the gods is realized. These ritual earthenware pieces make an intriguing pairing with Pitelka's Raku tea bowls, also "shaped by the minimal intervention necessary to transform raw material into useful form" (p. 49) and similarly main actors in a highly programmed ceremony (that of *chanoyu*). A major difference is of course the active circulation of teaware in art collections and the improbability of divorcing the disposable earthenware from their function, which dictates not only their material and form but also their short lifespan and ultimate lack of commercial potential.

That a work's artistic value can be contingent upon its salability—rather than vice versa—is also touched on in Richard Davis' essay on "Madhubani painting," originally ceremonial wall murals in private bed chambers that made the leap onto transportable sheets of flat paper and into the world market. Madhubani refers to the region in India where female family members celebrated a new marriage by creating "a painted world" on the wedding chamber walls that, in Davis' words, "evokes, and perhaps invokes, the fertility of a plenteous natural and divine world" (p. 82). The relocation of Madhubani paintings from wall to paper, and from wedding chamber to museum, was set in motion by the positive aesthetic appraisal of the originals by outsiders and the villagers' penury in the 1950s and 60s. Commercializing the wedding chamber style of painting reactivated its practice (which had all but stopped because of bleak living conditions) and opened up new avenues of employment and creativity for the more talented local women artists. The displacement from Madhubani domestic space and religious practice also enabled the preservation of the painting style.

The indigo-dyed textiles of Sumba, Indonesia, examined by Janet Hoskins are also exclusively female creations that became commercialized for a tourist market. The great tension sparked by the refashioning of this local product to appeal to a larger, international audience is not so much the fear of growing dissociation from culturally authentic forms and practices but the fear of growing female entrepreneurship. Hoskins demonstrates through the singular case of Marta Mete, the most successful textile promoter of her region, that a constellation of concerns over money, sex, and power converged on the assertive woman whose thriving commercial dealings garnered her more criticism than praise. She is condemned doubly for her craft—for traditional beliefs associate textile dyeing with

the occult and commerce with slippery morality. Old concepts, rather than rendered obsolete by modern values, persist in mediating Subanese encounters with the new realities of market, tourism, and commerce.

The “Movements” section consists of two essays that discuss the physical relocation of two respective object groups, coincidentally both from China, to different geo-cultural regions. They leave their land of origin under vastly different circumstances: as plundered war trophies in James Hevia’s chapter and as Buddhist proselytizing medium in Cynthia Bogel’s chapter. The Qing imperial objects taken from the Summer Palace by European armies (Hevia focuses primarily on the British imperial forces) in 1860, and the Buddhist artifacts and texts amassed and brought home by the Japanese monk Kūkai after his studies in the Chinese capital in 806, do share some similarities.

First, the Chinese identity of the objects remained fundamental after the cultural crossing. As foreign imports, they served as triumphant testimony to the circumstances and agents of their removal, and, more simply, they were regarded as items of exotic novelty. Encountering China at its low point, the British bolstered its own image as the superior military and race through conquest and plunder of a weaker nation-culture; on the other hand, catching China at its high point, Kūkai fed into Japan’s cosmopolitan ambition by forming an authentic link with the fountainhead of high learning and refined culture.

Second, reclassification by imposition of translated and transliterated names and descriptions pulled the objects into a new coherence. Even as the items continue to physically disperse through time, the nomenclature furnished by the British looters and Kūkai respectively remains firmly fixed. To this day, museums, collectors, and historians comprehend the first group through the label “From the Summer Palace of the Emperor of China” and the second through the *Catalogue of Imported Items*, the original list compiled by Kūkai for formal submission to the Japanese imperial court. What Bogel says of the Kūkai items can also apply to the Summer Palace plunder: once the objects became physically, linguistically, and epistemologically acculturated, “they reconstituted themselves, carrying both their past and creating their present history” (pp. 169–70).

Like the first section, the last section “Memories” contains essays unconnected by subject but meant to cohere thematically. Even more so than “Functions,” “Memories” is a catchall heading that verges on the unwieldy and uninformative. Instead, I find that linking the three chapters to recurring themes throughout the book is a more fruitful exercise.

Ashley Thompson’s examination of Cambodian portrait statuary broaches issues of representation also raised in DeCaroli’s chapter on early Indian imagery. While DeCaroli focuses on representation of divine figures, Thompson



deals with statues, erected by and for kings of the Angkorian empire, that have double subjects: a god and a human. In addition to: “Did the king serve as a model for the god, or was the god a model for the king?” (p. 185) were questions of how the imagery also represented the man who commissioned the work (usually a son or descendant) as well as how it represented the triangulated relationship of the god, the king who is represented in the statue, and the king who created the statue. When Thompson speaks of the ancient Cambodian statue “conceived as the posthumous abode of the person/god embodied within” (p. 203), she echoes DeCaroli’s explanation of living images as the convergence of spirit(s) and physical form. Both authors call attention to linguistic conflation to signal conceptual conflation: the Sanskrit word *devatā* refers to deity and to statue (p. 37); the word dharma can designate at once moral merit and statue (p. 187). Representations of the king as dharma broadcast for perpetuity the merging of religious belief and political rulership, as well as the divine and the secular faces.

The Balinese royal *keris* (double-edged ceremonial dagger) also functions as a tool for political legitimation and self-aggrandizement. In her chapter, Lene Pedersen recounts the role played by a historically significant *keris* named *Ki Bangawan Canguh*, a fourteenth-century gift to Bali’s king from the emperor of Majapahit, in bolstering the authority of a presidential candidate and the noble house that endorsed her in the year 1998. Proving that to this day *keris* maintain their ability to confer power and signal the mandate to rule, Pedersen dissects how they “work magic” and “affect their viewers and surrounding circumstances” (p. 223). *Ki Bangawan Canguh* in particular, appealing on rational and irrational levels, instills reverence in the beholder through a combination of its kingly provenance and miraculous capacity to cause earth tremors; it empowers its holder by validating him/her in the presence of the beholder. The validation functions in curious circular fashion: the noble house that possesses *Ki Bangawan Canguh* expresses their endorsement of Megawati Sukarnoputri for president by inviting her to a ceremony of ancestral deification, at which point the *keris* expresses its own approval of her by emanating rays of light and shaking inexplicably, while Megawati in turn confirms the authenticity of the dagger by declaring that she had seen this very object once in a dream.

Did the *keris* empower the noble house to support Megawati, or did the noble house, through Megawati, empower the *keris*? Pedersen, along with two other authors in the volume, cites Alfred Gell’s theorization on art and agency: that art objects frequently act as the mediums through which people (primarily the maker or owner) manifest their intentions. The closest parallels in the book are presented in the chapters on the wedding chamber murals and indigo-dyed textiles on which

messages of female domesticity and female sexuality, respectively, are inscribed in the design by their makers.

The book's last essay by Kaja McGowan keeps the reader in Bali and brings to light things not meant to be seen—the sacred contents (raw ingredients, in McGowan's words) of shrine deposit boxes. We return to two themes already encountered in the book: the act and ramifications of looting and the satiation of the twentieth-century global art market. Yet rather than focus on the objects of larceny and desire (the shrine statues, coins, and jewels) McGowan deviates from Hevia, Davis, and Hoskins for turning her attention to the items regarded as *not* traffic-worthy, and thereby promptly discarded by the enterprising thieves. Characterizing Balinese shrines as "way stations for souls en route to purification," (p. 243) she describes the selective snatching and scattering of objects and ingredients as an "[annihilation of] the transportation systems for ascending souls and descending deities" (p. 246). The sacrilege of denying deceased ancestors a peaceful resting place needs no explanation, and transformations in ancestral shrine architecture, such as statues secured behind padlocks and possible miniaturization and indoor shift of the entire memorial complex, continue to take place to maintain traditional belief in ancestral afterlife. Similarly, adjustments in practice to ensure ritual perpetuation are mentioned in Cort's essay, with washable porcelain becoming an acceptable substitute for disposable earthenware. Faith in the import of the raw ingredients prevail in the face of infiltrating foreign aesthetic values, which have not sapped but strengthened Balinese religious resolve.

In the preceding paragraphs, I have discussed the chapters of *What's the Use of Art* in order of their appearance in the book with the aim of charting out a way to grasp them as linked thoughts. They should not be read as concise chapter summaries, for in the effort to review the book as a coherent whole, I have had to leave out many of the intricate arguments and fascinating revelations made in the essays (with the hope that the reader has been sufficiently enticed). This brings me to my one and only major criticism of the book. The overarching question that brings together the nine excellent studies is both its greatest strength and weakness. The concluding chapter by Jan Mrázek displays this conflicted handling most prominently.

The editors begin and end the volume with frank denouncements of art history as a discipline. Pitelka throws down the gauntlet in the introduction, allowing Mrázek to commence his chapter with a bold frontal blow: "A thing, such as an art work, is perceived and experienced differently by different people and in different situations. This obvious fact, and the fact that art history makes people experience things in specific ways, is often concealed by the pretension of the discipline that its way is the most informed and objective way of seeing art" (p. 272). He explicates

his position through the example of *wayang*, Javanese shadow puppet theater: how it is (mis)understood by “mainstream art history” (his words) and how it is *really* viewed by Javanese audiences, in live performance and on television.

The two main problems of art history introduced by Pitelka apply here. First, an art object does not thrive on aesthetic notions alone. According to Mrázek, art history, which he defines as “the discipline as well as its associated institutions, such as museums that exhibit art and books about art” (pp. 276–77), completely denies the performance aspect of *wayang* by treating individual puppets as isolated objects of aesthetic contemplation. Fortunately, Mrázek sidesteps a wholly Manichean comparative scheme by offering two primary Javanese ways of experiencing the performance as “culturally appropriate apprehension” of this art (Pitelka’s words): live participation enlists the viewer’s five senses while television viewing permits as well as enforces detachment (one is spared from standing in the crowd but prevented from social commingling). Yet, clearly favoring live viewing, Mrázek remarks that Javanese people perceive watching televised *wayang* as the “new, modern, and ‘Western’” way (p. 276), and he himself likens it to art history’s fragmented and detached presentation of *wayang*. The “West” looms large as an unwelcome interlocutor, and it is villainized indirectly in the form of “art history,” thus bringing us to the second problem: the West is still not meeting the East eye to eye. Mrázek runs down a list of English-language survey texts on Southeast Asian art that misrepresent *wayan* as just the puppets propped up lifelessly in front of static black backgrounds and implicates the art museums and art history classes that follow suit. Those museums and classes, like the books, are presumably Western, or Western-inspired. His example of Western incomprehension par excellence is André Malraux, who in the 1920s forcibly removed sculpture (one ton total in weight) from the walls of the temple of Bantay Srei with the reasoning that he appreciated it as Art while the natives knew only fetishes.

While the frustration that Mrázek and Pitelka express toward a narrow vision of art and its history is easy to sympathize with, it is disconcerting, especially for a practicing art historian, to read their passionate cry against the likes of Croce, Read, and Malraux, giants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as if they were the voices of art history *today*. The two editors’ highly reductive characterization of art history as monotone and prejudiced is itself in danger of being one-dimensional and imbalanced. The call for putting art in context is now the standard approach and not a fresh challenge. Even a cursory look at lists of new titles coming out of leading academic presses will prove this, for the *de rigueur* two-part book title promises that each volume will cover a wide subject-theme and a narrow temporal-contextual focus. Of course in the diverse range of books on Asian art that are published annually, from the focused academic tome to the



general-interest illustrated guidebook, some do linger more than others on aesthetic and connoisseurial evaluations, but such a methodological emphasis is appropriate depending on the intended purpose and audience of the book. Without acknowledging the diversity of publication genres and audiences for Asian art, the editors' broad criticism further confounds their stated problem of the oversimplification of art.

Pitelka does acknowledge that art historians started to grapple with the context of production and consumption in the 1970s, although that does not stop him and his co-editor from insisting that a dominant art history exists that is evermore obsessed with art and its maker as beauty and genius. The defiant tone of the book certainly allows for calling out specific culprits, but the editors do not mention names, at least none from the last three decades.

Most readers of the book will, more likely than not, be accepting of Pitelka and Mrázek's proposal to contemplate how art is used and experienced rather than just how it looks. They will also welcome an exploration of alternative definitions of art that are not necessarily dependent on form, style, and iconography. Yet the two editors and the nine authors are all coy about providing definitions. A book whose premise rests on the significance of the uses of art is remiss in not directly, promptly, and satisfactorily addressing what art *is* before addressing its uses. How are the objects under investigation in each chapter judged as art in their respective contexts? How do their uses support their status as art? On the other hand, authors try so hard to prove that their subjects function beyond formalist values that little or no ink is spilled on analysis of their physical properties, and equally little space is devoted to illustrations. Some arguments clearly lose forcefulness from such abstemious handling. Not only is the reader obliged to creatively imagine what many of these fascinating artworks look like—notably, the colorful and lively Madhubani mural designs that attracted the cosmopolitan eyes of William Archer and Pupul Jayakar, the majestic Qing-dynasty imperial bronze animal heads repatriated by Chinese nationals in 2001, the two black Raku bowls that look alike but occupy polar positions of importance, or the monumental Khmer statue cut out of a temple wall by Malraux—but she/he also cannot fully judge the weight of the authors' claims. For instance, an especially crucial visual comparison necessary to clinch Mrázek's critique of acontextual treatment of *wayang* is between those very photos (which he does not provide) from the survey books by Philip Rawson, Maud Gerard-Geslan, Fiona Kerlogue, Fritz Wagner, and Tibor Bodrogi that he bemoaned and his own photos (which he provides) of *wayang* in action. He should allow the reader to *see*, not merely read, how the latter are more effective in communicating the full tenor of this art form.

Despite the occasional lapses in civility when *What's the Use of Art* stereotypes and demonizes art history, art museums, and art books as dark agents of decontextualization, this book brings to the forefront subjects, time periods, and issues that have been hitherto underrepresented in scholarship. More importantly, it invites healthy and impassioned debate about what art is, what it does, and what it can do.

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ARS ORIENTALIS VOLUME 37  
CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN YUAN PAINTING

Earlier versions of these papers were presented at the conference, *New Directions in Yuan Painting*, held at the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in December 2006.

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## PREFACE

### *Current Directions in Yuan Painting*

IN THE 1970S, a seminar on the painting or history of the Yuan dynasty was standard curriculum at the major centers of graduate study in East Asian art in the United States. Inspired, perhaps, by Sherman Lee and Wai-kam Ho's landmark exhibition, "Chinese Art Under the Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368)" at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1968, and by the first opportunities to see paintings in the People's Republic of China just a few years later, luminaries in the Chinese art field, including (in alphabetical order) James Cahill, Wen Fong, Wai-kam Ho, and Chu-tsing Li as well as scholars in Chinese area studies, including Francis Cleaves and Frederick Mote, taught seminars in which students wrote papers and often developed dissertations on Yuan topics. Every student during this period turned to Li's *Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains* (Artibus Asiae, 1965) as the model for both the study of a seminal painting and the specific questions to ask about a Yuan painting masterpiece; to Wen Fong's *Sung and Yuan Paintings* (Metropolitan Museum, 1973) for a group of pedigree master works that one could study for the first time and firsthand in New York; and to James Cahill's *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279–1368* (Weatherhill, 1976) as the masterful synthesis of this period that took us beyond the masters and their paintings to the next tier of painters and oeuvres worthy of serious study. Although scholars still might have conceived of a Song–Yuan or Yuan–early Ming period in the history of Chinese art, by the early 1980s, the Yuan had come into its own in art historical discourse as many of these dissertation writers began teaching their own seminars on Yuan dynasty or acquiring or publishing Yuan paintings on behalf of their museums across the globe.

The world of the 1980s, however, led students of the 1970s, their teachers, and by the 1990s, their own students, far from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. China was open to researchers who were uncovering a myriad of finds in museum storerooms and through excavation that could not have been predicted based on previous knowledge of Chinese art. Not only was it necessary to rewrite China's art history through the newly excavated objects, it was almost impossible to keep the scholarly or more general literature apace with the discoveries. Another new direction for those whose graduate training had focused on Yuan was modern and contemporary Chinese art: an open China meant chances to visit galleries and talk to painters, the need to determine which artists would still be important when painting histories were written in subsequent centuries, and the mandate to bring relevant Chinese painters into the theoretical framework of modernism. Yuan was just one among many foci of graduate training from the mid-1980s through the 1990s.

Yet another aspect of the study of Yuan art was gathering momentum in the first years of the twenty-first century. Perhaps influenced by China's open policy toward ethnic minorities, perhaps the result of international interest in ethnic studies,

and certainly influenced by new finds at Yuan period sites from Fujian to Tibet, exhibitions with the words Khan and Mongol in their titles were mounted in Asia, Europe, and North America. Among them were: “L’Asie des steppes d’Alexandre le Grand à Genghis Khan” (Barcelona and Paris, 2000); “Age of the Great Khan: Pluralism in Chinese Art and Culture under the Mongols” (Taipei, 2001); “The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353” (New York and Los Angeles, 2003); “Genghis Khan — The Ancient Nomadic Culture of Northern China” (Beijing and Hohhot, 2004); and “Dschingis Khan und Seine Erben, Das Weltreich der Mongolen” (Bonn and Munich, 2005). Sometimes the masterpieces of painting on which young scholars had cut their teeth in the 1970s found their way into these exhibitions, but even in Taipei they were no longer the focus of the catalogue.

In 2006, the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania was honored with the opportunity to exhibit six Yuan paintings from a private collection. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Penn Museum hosted a conference whose purpose was to provide a forum for scholars who had come to the field in the 1970s and early 1980s. Most of these scholars had written dissertations on Yuan-period topics, and their careers over the next several decades had taken them in many directions other than Yuan. Each was asked to present a paper on recent research on Yuan painting. Some returned to issues that they had not considered for many years, and others chose to pursue directions that would not have been possible in Yuan research twenty or thirty years ago. The papers of nine of the speakers, in addition to commentary from the conference and further thoughts inspired by the papers by Robert Harrist, are presented here.

On behalf of my colleagues who have chosen to include their papers, as well as the University of Pennsylvania Museum, I offer my profound gratitude to *Ars Orientalis*, the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Museum, and the University of Michigan for being the receptive and accommodating sponsors of this publication. Finally, I thank Ann Gunter for her tremendous enthusiasm, support, and camaraderie as editor of what turned out to be her final issue as Head of Scholarly Publications and Programs at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, and Jane Lusaka for her willingness to shepherd this publication to completion.

Nancy S. Steinhardt, Guest Editor  
Philadelphia, 2008

## THE YUAN “REVOLUTIONARY” PICNIC

*Feasting on the Fruits of Song (A Historiographic Menu)*

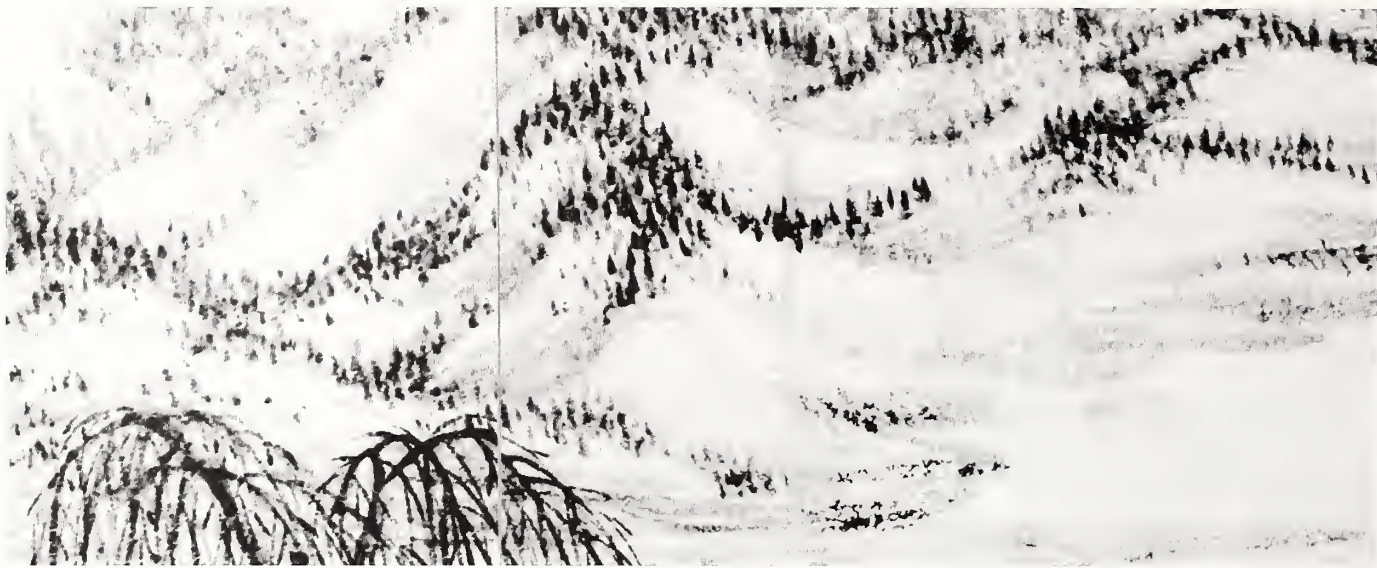
### Abstract

The distinctive, “revolutionary” nature of Yuan painting, separating “early” from “late” in Chinese painting history, is one of the best-known guideposts in Chinese art history, a staple of survey textbooks and the introductory classroom. A historiographic study of this characterization reveals a more complex evolution of views about the nature of Yuan painting, as well as raising broader questions about favored and peripheralized genres and styles, the relationship of art criticism to art history, the reading of present-day attitudes into past history, historical objectivity and relativism, and the periodizing of history.

THROUGHOUT MY YEARS in this field, Yuan painting has been widely regarded as a revolutionary moment, the most dramatic of all transitions in the history of Chinese painting. But it is more than an academic exercise, at this time of intellectual revision within the discipline, to ask in all seriousness, was it really such a moment? That great changes took place between early Song and early Ming is not in dispute, but when did its stylistic inception take place, how rapidly or gradually did it come about, what forces gave rise to it, and how was it perceived, both then and afterwards? And to inquire more broadly, just what do we mean by “Yuan painting”? Should we think of it as singular or plural? If by “Yuan painting” we simply mean paintings made during the Yuan dynasty, the second question here is already answered. But if by “Yuan painting” we mean something visually distinctive, something adhering to the definition of a period style, different stylistically from its forebears and from its offspring, then a convincing answer is harder to come by. It is not too hard to assemble a set of paintings comparing Yuan and Song as well as Yuan and Ming in the areas of landscape painting, figures (both secular and religious), animals, and flower paintings, whose dates might stump almost anyone who did not already know them (figs. 1–9). The purpose of this article, however, is not to provide a simple and singular answer to these questions, for which subtle and complex consideration is due, but rather to offer an overview of other people’s perceptions of this subject.

The concept of period style is constructed on the basis of two phenomena: historical change and historians’ presentation of that change in ways that resemble the books that they write, divided into chapters. One page and you are in one chapter; turn a page and you are in a new chapter, a new period, a new style. Between one chapter and the next, the book implies, lies a radical change. In China, dynastic upheavals, dynastic archives, and dynastic histories valorize this view of historical structure. It works for politics. But does it work for art? Does art come in chapters, internally consistent and neatly differentiated, in China or elsewhere? Do art





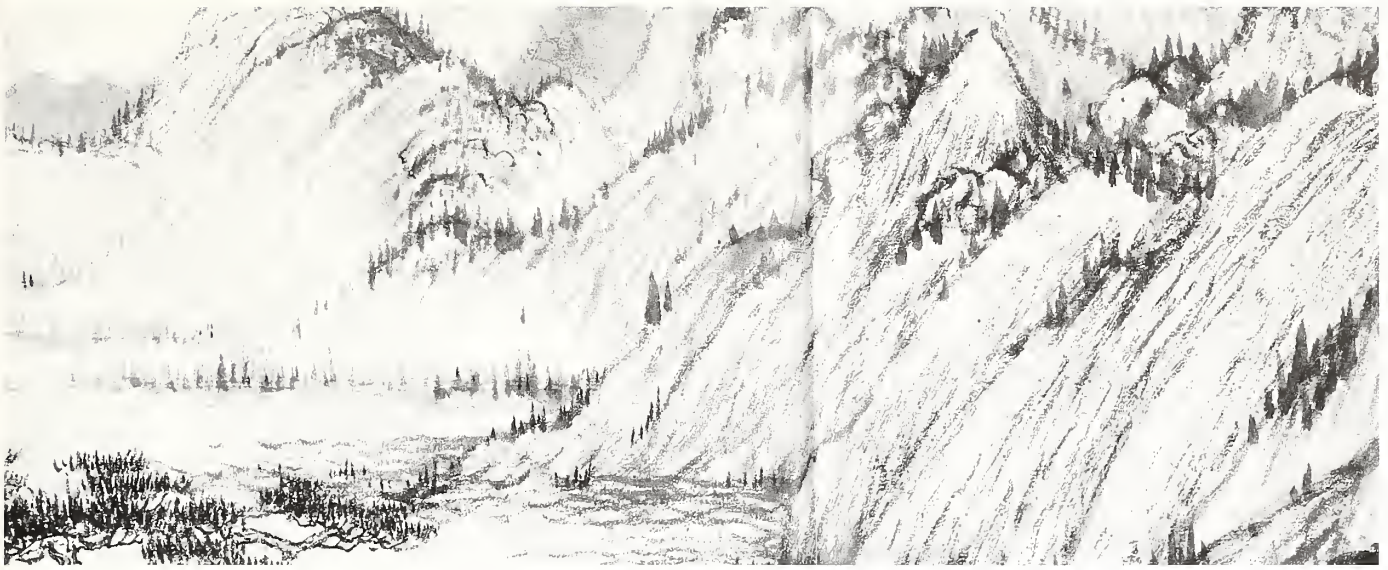
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Qiao Zhongchang, *Illustration to the Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff*, ca. second quarter 12th century (Southern Song dynasty), handscroll (detail), ink on paper, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. After Lin Po-t'ing, editor, *Grand View: Special Exhibition of Northern Song Painting and Calligraphy* (Taipei: 2007), no. 25.

historical chapters correspond to historical chapters based on the rise and fall of dynasties?

The most distinctively new chapter in the history of Western art arguably was the Renaissance. In his seminal book *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (1960), Erwin Panofsky engaged the argument not simply of whether there were other similar chapters, renaissances with lowercase “r’s”, but the very nature of chapters and change: “the old question,” as he put it, of whether the Renaissance was really “so unique or so decisive as has been supposed” and whether there was any clear dividing line between it and not-it, medieval before and Mannerism or Baroque that followed; whether it was primarily local, Italian, or truly widespread; whether it came about all at once and if so, when, or gradually, in widely separated phases, “comparable to infancy ... adolescence ... maturity.”<sup>1</sup> “Of late,” he wrote, “the discussion has taken a new turn. There is a growing tendency not so much to revise as to eliminate the concept of the Renaissance—to contest not only its uniqueness but its very existence.”<sup>2</sup> More fundamentally still, as he wrote in his opening line, “Modern scholarship has become increasingly skeptical of periodization, that is to say, of the division of history in general, and individual historical processes in particular....”<sup>3</sup> When similar questions are brought to Chinese art history and historiography, therefore, they come quite belatedly, as usual.

History is a record of both change and stability, but historians tend to privilege the new over the continuing. “The historian is interested in the inception of styles, not in their perpetuation,” wrote Max Loehr.<sup>4</sup> That is the dominant view, and I know of no historian of Chinese art who has written to the contrary. One has to turn to social historians like Oscar Handlin to read that “the elements of continuity are the essentials, of mutation, the incidentals.”<sup>5</sup> Of sudden mutational change, the most radical, the swiftest, the most thorough, the most dramatic, and the most violent is the revolution. But “history”—the story told, as distinguished from “objective facts”—does not exist without agents of selection and interpretation. Perspective may not alter facts but it defines their significance. One might have a revolution and not see it, or conversely, one might see a revolution where others do not. Just how rapid or thoroughly transforming must events be to constitute a revolution?



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Huang Gongwang, *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, 1350 (Yuan dynasty), handscroll (detail), ink on paper, National Palace Museum, Taipei. After *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, 7: *Yuan dai huihua* (Beijing: 1999), 118–119.

The more closely it is examined for origins, the more any revolution can be viewed as an evolution, long in the making, depending as much on the gradual failure and collapse of the slow-moving status quo, the ancien régime, as on the substitution of a new order;<sup>6</sup> or in the sciences, depending as much on the gradual accumulation of non-normative anomalies as on the establishment of a new paradigm.<sup>7</sup> The shorter lived, the less successful, the less “revolutionary.” All depending on point of view. The American war “for the dissolution of bonds” with England became generally known as a revolution only after the British surrender at Yorktown.<sup>8</sup>

There was a particularly great change in the last two thousand years of Chinese painting history — a *greatest* change, arguably, and a great revolution to some. In Loehr’s words, “Toward the end of the Song dynasty, in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, there occurred a break in the history of Chinese painting, a break so profound as none before or after that time.”<sup>9</sup> Chinese art historians are all too familiar with it. In the simplest formulation, as it is so frequently taught, it took place around the year 1300, the period of the Song-to-Yuan dynastic transition, triggered by the Mongol conquest of China; it led from a tradition defined by professional artists to one practiced “at leisure” by government bureaucrats, from court and temple patronage to painting by an amateur elite for the sake of self-cultivation and communication with one’s intellectual peers, from “mere” craftsmanship to lofty self-expression, from a broad range of subject matter to landscape as “the only proper subject matter for the creative painter” (in the words of Sherman Lee),<sup>10</sup> from mimetic representation to a calligraphically constructed, rhythmically interpreted revival of past art, from nature to style, objectivity to subjectivity. In short, this transition heralds and celebrates the arrival of literati painting in China.

The first reference to Yuan painting as revolutionary that I am aware of appears in the earliest English-language monograph on Chinese painting, *Streams and Mountains Without End*, 1955, by Sherman Lee and Wen Fong, who write of its “revolutionary originality.”<sup>11</sup> (Professor Fong assures me that this expression was his, composed in 1953.) The first scholars I know to have referred literally to the Song–Yuan transition in painting as a revolution were James Cahill and Michael Sullivan,



independently in 1960, in two textbooks that became classroom standards.<sup>12</sup> Chu-tsing Li and Wen Fong soon afterward assigned leadership in this revolution to the eminent Yuan dynasty statesman, painter, calligrapher, connoisseur, and collector Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322).<sup>13</sup> To note the occurrence of a revolution is not to endorse it, but these writings are unambiguously negative toward later Song painting, characterized as “outworn and uncongenial modes” in Cahill’s words, and admiring of the Yuan in the way “these and other gifted men broke free from the conventions of Southern Song and set Chinese painting upon a new path,” according to Sullivan.<sup>14</sup>

While not without nuance and minor disagreements among them, these mid-twentieth-century scholars essentially constituted an intellectual cohort who articulated a standard that remains canonical in the field today and masks, for most contemporary readers, both the very different standards that preceded their day and an equally different standard that is emerging, slowly and piecemeal, in our own time. The contrast between these scholars and their forebears could not be more striking. One differential concerns this generation’s view of Song painting as mimetic, the culmination of a thousand-year collective mission by Chinese painters to master the art of illusion, after which interest in surface matters was eschewed for deeper, more subjective pursuits. But early twentieth-century writers like Raphael Petrucci drew quite a different lesson, emphasizing that for Song artists, painting was naturalistic and idealistic in equal measure and “appearances were but the visible covering.” For Petrucci, writing in 1912, it was Song painting not Yuan that departed from what came before, creating “something new, an imaginary world more beautiful than the real world, wherein the intimate relation of beings and things was disclosed.”<sup>15</sup> For him, Tang-to-Song was a greater transition than Song-to-Yuan.

An even earlier writer, Stephen Bushell served as medical attendant to the British legation in Beijing from 1868 to 1899, then returned to write a pioneering two-volume study on Chinese art, commissioned by the British Board of Education and completed in 1906. Bushell understood the literary character of Chinese painting as the product of Song culture rather than as a revolutionary turn of events separating Song from Yuan, as he wrote:

The Song dynasty was literary and artistic, rather than warlike, and under its rule the Chinese intellect seems to have become, as it were crystallized, and Chinese art to have developed into the lines which it still, for the most part, retains.... The poets of the period wrote their verses with the same brush which afterwards drew the pictures of the scene which had inspired them. There hardly was a poet who was not at the same time a painter. Painting was



not a special profession, it was a means by which every cultured writer was able to express his thought, to illustrate his genius.<sup>16</sup>

Are these all not the very traits that would later be ascribed to Yuan?

Other early writers shared this view, like Herbert Giles (who served the British consular service in China for a quarter century, writing in 1905), Friedrich Hirth (who served in the Chinese maritime administration throughout the 1870s, also writing in 1905), and Laurence Binyon (writing in 1908). They similarly drew no strict boundary between Song and Yuan, focusing greater attention on the naturalistic painting they preferred in both periods than they did on literati painters of either dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Binyon, for example, wrote in 1908 “of the whole [Yuan] period” that “it continued the art of Song with but little diminution of glory”; and five years later he added that “in the main this [Yuan] period is marked by the naturalism to which the later Song art was tending, and by a certain hardening and loss of the delicate vibration of life,” together with “the beginnings of an academic preoccupation with method and material.”<sup>18</sup>

This was the first generation of serious writing in the West on the subject of Chinese painting, at a time when Western views were colored by contemporary Japanese views, developed in concert with American aficionados of Japan whose aesthetic agenda was to encourage and help Japan to preserve its traditional culture in the face of wholesale modernization. Edward S. Morse, Ernest Fenollosa, and Okakura Kakuzō (岡倉覺三, Okakura Tenshin 天心) are the best-known names here. Old was preferred, Tang and Song corresponding to the Nara and Heian periods, linking Japan’s newly restored imperial rule to past imperial glories, to Buddhism, and to boldness in Chinese art. Literati painting of the Song, Yuan, and beyond was associated by many in Japan with China’s soft, civil bureaucracy in its most humiliating moments of military weakness and defeat; its Japanese derivative, *nanga* 南畫 or *bunjinga* 文人畫 had little vitality left after the Meiji period; and the Neo-Confucian philosophy in which it was based was being challenged by a newly revived Shinto. The “new importation” (*shin hakusai* 新舶載) of mostly recent, or post-Song, paintings that flooded the import market after the bankrupting of many a Chinese bureaucrat in the declining years of the Manchu dynasty was spurned by many of the elite scholars and collectors in Japan, while many of the earlier works they longed to import were “lost” to the West. For them, the Song–Yuan transition was not a revolution but a devolution—the beginning of a slow and painful decline.<sup>19</sup>

Ernest Fenollosa wrote from Tokyo in 1912, “the narrow sect of Confucianists ... are a set of Sadducees and Pharisees who hold with the tenacity of bull-dogs to the letter of the law.”<sup>20</sup> This negative attitude toward the foundations of literati painting



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Qiao Zhongchang, *Illustration to the Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff*, ca. second quarter 12th century (Southern Song dynasty), handscroll (detail), ink on paper, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. After Lin Po-t'ing, editor, *Grand View: Special Exhibition of Northern Song Painting and Calligraphy* (Taipei: 2007), no. 25.

was widespread in China as well, in China's chaotic post-dynastic decades, among those intellectual leaders who sought out new roads to modernity and revitalization and rejected traditional literati art and culture as narrow elitism. Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), a minor painter as well as a great reformer, wrote that pitting Chinese literati painting against Western painting would be “like using a shot-gun to fight against a sixty-three inch canon.”<sup>21</sup> He noted:

Four or five hundred years ago, Chinese painting was the best. What a pity that it has not developed since then.... Chinese painting has declined terribly because [literati painting] theory is ridiculous.... Today, industry, commerce, and everything else are related to art. Without art reform those fields cannot develop. Without art reform those fields cannot develop. If we adhere to the old way without change, Chinese painting will become extinct. Now, at this historic moment, it is up to those who are up to the challenge to arise. They must begin a new era by combining Chinese and Western art.<sup>22</sup>

A wide array of contemporaries like the young Raphael Petrucci in Belgium,<sup>23</sup> Laurence Binyon's protégé Arthur Waley in London,<sup>24</sup> Alfred Salmony in Berlin, and Ludwig Bachhofer, transplanted in 1935 from Germany to Chicago, saw literati painting not as a liberating moment but as a slow descent of Chinese painting into overly disciplined, Confucianistic strictures and undisciplined, meaningless brush play. If there was anything revolutionary about Yuan painting, it was lost on this generation, including America's foremost private collector of East Asian art, Charles Lang Freer, whose taste was formed by his association with Fenollosa and by contemporary Western painters' interest in Japanese decorative arts. For Freer, Song and Ming painting were not yet well differentiated, but colorful depiction was preferable to literati brush play, and his taste in Yuan painting was best realized by his 1917 purchase of a delicately colored and exquisitely detailed Qian Xuan 錢選 (ca. 1235–before 1307) painting of crab apples and gardenias that suggested that nothing much had changed from Song to Yuan (at least nothing that was obvious



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 Attributed to Tang Yin, *Drunken Fisherman by a Reed Bank*, early 16th century (Ming dynasty), hanging scroll (detail), ink on paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. After Wan-go Weng, *Chinese Painting and Calligraphy: A Pictorial Survey* (New York: 1978), no. 35.

to him).<sup>25</sup> The Yuan interpretation of nature, wrote Alfred Salmony most explicitly, “may be fussier, more detailed, [but] it echoes the old [Song] absorption in the meditation on Nature: it displays no break in the evolution [*Entwicklung*], but rather a decline [*Verebben*].”<sup>26</sup> For Ludwig Bachhofer, also no fan of later painting, the real transition occurred during the late Song period, with Chan Buddhist painters whose “radical destruction of form must have appeared revolutionary” but then “quietly became the generally accepted style of the next.”<sup>27</sup> For this generation, Zhao Mengfu was anything but a revolutionary leader. Fenollosa, typical of his time, called Zhao Mengfu an “eclectic realist,”<sup>28</sup> while for Petrucci, Zhao Mengfu’s work was a merely a “demonstration that tradition could be revived.”<sup>29</sup>

All of this is not to say that literati painting was wholly without a following before the mid-twentieth century, and among its most notable admirers was Naitō Konan 内藤湖南. Naitō was an intellectual leader among those Japanese who saw modern Japan as the savior of East Asian culture. But as a pioneering historian, he fashioned a history in which the Tang-to-Song transition was China’s great time of revolution, albeit one that failed to thrive and survive beyond the Mongol invasions and the xenophobic reaction that followed the Mongol expulsion. He understood the rise of petty capitalism as the foremost mark of Song modernity, appreciated the republican nature of the Song period’s rising literati class, and recognized literati painting as a Song rather than a Yuan invention.<sup>30</sup> The measure of his aesthetic exceptionalism can be seen in the censure he still incurs among Japanese art historians to this day.<sup>31</sup> One might draw parallels between Naitō Konan and the writings of Tokyo-based Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖 in terms both of aesthetic outlook and Japanese reception.<sup>32</sup>



In Republican China, artist-author Pan Tianshou 潘天授 (1897–1971) represents a cohort of Chinese artists who sought to breathe new life into traditional painting, referring to it as *guohua* 國畫, “national painting,” and suggesting that rather than *retarditaire* in comparison with Western painting, it was ahead of its time, headed in the more subjective and expressive direction that post-Impressionist painting had turned many centuries later. Devolution had no place in Pan Tianshou’s proud history of Chinese painting. Still, when it came to situating literati painting in history, in his *Zhongguo huihua shi* 中國繪畫史 (History of Chinese painting, 1926), Pan Tianshou linked it to a period that stretched from Five Dynasties through Yuan, which he called the “*zhong shi*” 中史 or “middle period” as a conspicuous analogy to the Western medieval, and which he saw as followed in the Ming and after by a period that he dignified by the term “*jin shi*” 今史 or “modern era.”<sup>33</sup> While Pan Tianshou acknowledged developments in the Yuan that differentiated it from Song, he insisted that the origins of all of these developments were established by artists of the preceding Song period.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in sum, these complex and varied early twentieth-century debates over orthodoxy and academism, over realism versus abstraction, over literati values and tradition versus modernity, adhered to no clear national boundaries, and whatever one’s view there was no strict chronological boundary drawn between Song and Yuan.

John Ferguson was the first American scholar writing on Chinese painting to have lived in China and become personally familiar with the Chinese collectors and their values, during an extraordinary career overseas in which he spanned the distance between outsider and insider.<sup>35</sup> He shared some of the then-prevalent negative attitudes toward the brushwork of later Chinese painting and wrote of “the pedantry of the scholarly class,”<sup>36</sup> yet he also rejected Japanese influence over matters of Chinese taste<sup>37</sup> and demanded the “inherent right of an artistic people to interpret its own art and to determine its own standards of relative values.”<sup>38</sup> Writing in 1927, and anticipating a new direction among art historians, he attributed “conventionality” to the Southern Song and “spontaneity” to the Yuan artists, rather than the other way around, and he seems to credit the unruly Mongols themselves for this. “In painting,” he wrote, Zhao Mengfu “swept away the formal conventions of the Southern Song Academy of Painting and restored freedom to artists.”<sup>39</sup> Still, Ferguson preferred the more descriptive work of Yuan artists like Qian Xuan, Sheng Mou 盛懋 (ca. 1330–1369), and Cao Zhibai 曹知白 (1272–1355) to the more freely drawn works of Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354), Wang Meng 王蒙 (ca. 1308–1385), and Wu Zhen 吳鎮 (1280–1354),<sup>40</sup> who had “the virtue of freedom and spontaneity” but were often “dilettantish and pedantic,” “clever,” “calligraphic rather than imaginative,” and “lack[ed] the inspiration of the earlier great landscapists.”<sup>41</sup>

Ferguson's tendencies were followed and further developed over the next several decades by the encyclopedist Osvald Sirén ("The Yuan painters ... freed painting to a large extent from the trammels of traditional formalism, which prevailed at the academic centers of the Song period and made it serve as the immediate instrument for the visions of the mind and the melodies of the heart"<sup>42</sup>); by French diplomat-collector J. P. Dubosc (who condemned the "descriptive painting," "conventional formulas," "reprehensible mannerisms," and "sweetness" of the Southern Song in favor of "the great genius of the Yuan period"<sup>43</sup>); and by the curator Laurence Sickman ("The Yuan Dynasty, for all its social turmoil and foreign domination, was not a mere afterglow of the great Song spirit, or a transition into the subsequent centuries, but one of the greatest creative periods of Far Eastern painting"<sup>44</sup>).

Walter Benjamin — an unlikely source, one might think — recognized and heralded this "shift in values" in a little-known review-essay written in approval of two Ming-Qing painting exhibitions, mounted in Stockholm and Oslo by Sirén in 1936 and at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris by Dubosc in 1937. Benjamin looked favorably upon the spontaneity of the Ming-Qing painting styles for their "fleeting and changeful character," derived from their association with calligraphic brushwork and a literary sensibility. Yet his essay confirms, even as it rejects, at that turning-point in time the continuing Western identification of Song and Yuan painting as one:

Here in the West, because of a certain bias and a certain ignorance, we have lauded above all Chinese painting from the Song period (tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries), and accorded equal regard to that of the Yuan period (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), which is viewed as a continuation of the former. This somewhat confused admiration for the "Song-Yuan" used to turn abruptly into contempt at the mere mention of the Ming and Qing dynasties ...

A "superficial assessment" which Benjamin says we can now revise.<sup>45</sup>

To the modern revolutionary politician and evolutionary biologist, the definition of revolution and its differentiation from evolution is a theoretical matter of the greatest import, as the writings of Lenin,<sup>46</sup> Mao,<sup>47</sup> and Darwin<sup>48</sup> all take pains to make clear. To historians of Chinese painting, all of these concepts figure prominently in the still-evolving views of the change from Song to Yuan. The concept of radical revolution (*geming* 革命) as a systematic rejection of past values and forms was not native to dynastic China. Before the mid-nineteenth century, all beneficial change was conceived in terms of cyclical restoration (*fluxing* 復興), a renewal (*chongxin* 重新) or revival (*fugu* 復古) of some original harmony lost in the natural course of dynastic decline, or else as a synthesis (*dacheng* 大成) of past achieve-



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Fanlong, attributed, *Sixteen Luohan*, 12th century (Southern Song dynasty), handscroll (detail), ink on paper, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. After James Cahill, *Chinese Painting* (Lausanne: 1960), p. 94.

ments that would form the foundation for such a renewal.<sup>49</sup> From early times on, traditional critics of Chinese literature and the arts had well-developed notions of change, of period style, sometimes synchronized to the dynastic clock and sometimes not.<sup>50</sup> As for heroic or revolutionary figures, Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (dates unknown) of the early ninth century and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) both lived much too soon to observe the Song–Yuan transition, but both reckoned that they had already observed something like “the end” of art history (to use a modern term) and they agreed on just who ended it: the singular figure of Wu Daozi 吳道子 (689–after 755), after whom (as Zhang Yanyuan put it), “there have been no successors” and (in the words of Su Shi), “all possibilities for change in the arts had been exhausted.”<sup>51</sup>

I have not found any Yuan writer who wrote of Zhao Mengfu’s role in these terms, nor any who wrote of the Yuan transition and its aftermath as revolutionary. Tang Hou 湯垕 (ca. late 1250s–1310s) traveled in Zhao Mengfu’s intellectual circles in the Hangzhou area at the time of the Song–Yuan transition and authored the *Huajian* 畫鑒, recently studied and translated by Diana Chou. Professor Chou treats him not as a futurist but as an antiquarian who railed against work he regarded as *su* 俗 or *yinsu* 淫俗, translated by Chou as “faddish,” “trendy,” or “popular,” and whose values were located in the distant past.<sup>52</sup> Like Zhang Yanyuan





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6  
Anonymous, *The Four Sleepers*, 14th century (Yuan dynasty), hanging scroll (detail), ink on paper. Tokyo National Museum. After Gregory Levine and Yukio Lippit, *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (New York: 2007), no. 15.

and Su Shi, Tang Hou wrote of a *ne plus ultra* and his ideal of quality was achieved centuries earlier by Dong Yuan 董源, Li Cheng 李成, and Fan Kuan 範寬: “As no one among the ancients preceded them and no one would surpass them, the methods of landscape (painting) were for the first time complete.”<sup>53</sup> Rather than proclaiming or even noticing any widespread revolution in his own time, Tang Hou instead complained about the lack of aesthetic enlightenment in his own era and looked backward in time for an audience that still had insight and good taste.<sup>54</sup> He provided only two entries for Yuan artists, not for Zhao Mengfu but one for Gong Kai 龔開 and one for Chen Lin 陳琳; he wrote that Chen benefitted from studying Zhao (not his only mention of Zhao) and that “No artisan reached his [Chen’s] level in the two hundred years since the Song imperial court moved to the south.”<sup>55</sup>

In a parallel study of the contemporaneous text *Yunyan guoyan lu* 雲煙過眼錄 by Zhao Mengfu’s close friend Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298), Ankeney Weitz challenges the supposed political motive, namely the Mongol threat to Chinese cultural survival, for triggering this sudden revolution in Chinese painting style:

The heroic loyalty to the native Song dynasty on the part of a few painters and scholars has long dominated scholarly assessments of early Yuan



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Anonymous, *Guanyin of Putuoluo*, early 14th century (Yuan dynasty or Kamakura-Nanbokuchō periods) hanging scroll (detail), ink and colors and gold on silk, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. After Gregory Levine and Yukio Lippit, editors, *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (New York: 2007), no. 39.

culture.... They see Zhou's texts on Chinese art as expressions of his ethnic and cultural pride in the face of foreign occupation of his homeland.... However, a careful study of the text shows this to be an untenable analysis, since ... the majority of collectors listed by Zhou Mi were not Song loyalists from the South, but rather Yuan officials.... Within the context of Zhou Mi's biography, his art texts can be read as part of his reconciliation with the new circumstances in early Yuan Hangzhou.<sup>56</sup>

Students of Chu-tsing Li, Diana Chou and Ankeny Weitz represent the revisionism that has crept across the field in the past decade among Chinese art historians of a younger generation. Buttressed by the writings of Zhou Mi and Tang Hou, they have also helped displace the myth of disinterested literati amateurism with a more carefully nuanced view of the art market in the early Yuan. Weitz, for example, points out Zhou Mi's likely role as a semiprofessional connoisseur-for-hire.<sup>57</sup> She writes of Zhao Mengfu's professional behavior in his retirement years away from the court, as an artist with "ghost painters," or *daibi* 代筆; as a paid art instructor; and as an excellent practitioner of the supposedly artisan subject of architectural



ruled-line renderings that he taught intensively to his own son, Zhao Yong 趙雍 (1289–ca. 1363) (much to the critical approval of Tang Hou<sup>58</sup>).<sup>59</sup> Further erosion of the scholar-amateur mythology meant to distinguish the new-Yuan order from the old is found in Deborah Del Gais Muller’s study of the third major Yuan painting treatise from late in that dynasty, Xia Wenyan’s 夏文彥 (b. ca. 1315) *Tuhui baojian* 圖繪寶鑑, in which Xia Wenyan wrote on how Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–1374), considered the ultimate amateur painter of the era, “In his late years [painted] in a sketchy and simple way to repay obligations.”<sup>60</sup> Muller radically undermines the basis for distinguishing Song from Yuan, concluding that:

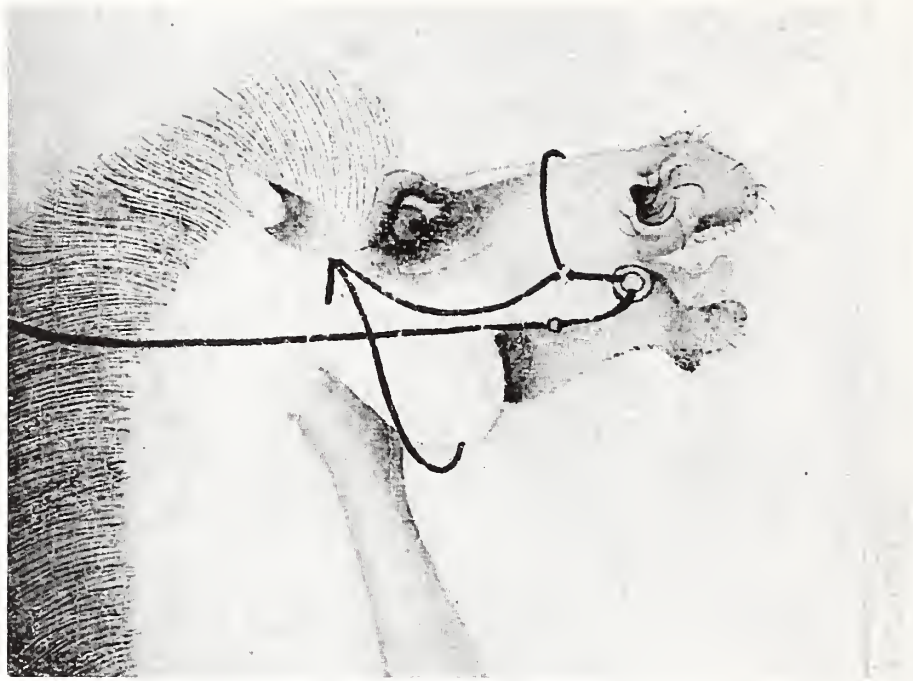
There was in actual practice *no clearcut, self-imposed separation* between the skilled, artisanlike, “professional” and “academic painters and the “literati” artists of the Yuan period; nor did these somewhat distinct social groups define themselves through their painting styles. The relationship between social class and artistic style was argued at the theoretical level by literati critics such as Xia Wenyan.”<sup>61</sup>

Zhao Mengfu’s antiquarianism, she notes, meant that he “drew upon an older, albeit from the literati point of view acceptable, academic model.”<sup>62</sup>

Recent stylistic studies have tended in the same revisionist direction. Maggie Bickford writes of Qian Xuan’s *Pear Blossoms* in the Metropolitan Museum and its traditional reception, that:

[It] is neither sketchy nor spontaneous. His brushwork per se is unassertive. His pleasure in craft is conspicuous. He applies outline and color with evident care and with cool tenderness. His image is finished and self-contained; it extends no invitation to participate in the re-creation of the processes through which it was made. It makes reference to the art of professional painters, in particular to the imperially sponsored flower painting of the Southern Song Academy. Qian’s choices here, and his unmistakable allegiance to features of professional and courtly flower painting, have proved embarrassing sometimes to contemporary and modern admirers. They wish to save the artist for scholar-painting hagiography, but they have trouble accommodating his work within a system whose ethos conflates spontaneity with sincerity, harbors a deep distrust of craft, despises professionalism, and expects its loyalist scholar-painters to affirm Chinese cultural values under conditions of alien conquest through acts of considered archaism, that, in their return to the past, stylistically repudiate the imperial art of Southern Song which lost China.<sup>63</sup>





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Attributed to Han Gan, *Night-Shining White*, 8th century (Tang dynasty), handscroll (detail), ink on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. After Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 8th–14th Century* (New York: 1992), pl. 1.

Qian Xuan, Ren Renfa 任仁發, Li Kan 李衍, Zhao Yong, Wang Yuan 王淵, and Zhao Mengfu himself, among numerous others, can be counted as part of a lineage of important late Song and Yuan scholars painting in realistic or naturalistic styles that they were not supposed to have been working in, often inadequately thought of as professional or court styles: Yuan scholars painting in so-called “Tang” and “Song” styles.<sup>64</sup> Religious painting in the Yuan was particularly *retardataire*, although not without its excellence.<sup>65</sup> Mirroring such painters and paintings, a generational trend (by which I mean a generation of thinking, not the age of the thinkers themselves) has now emerged, establishing precedents and building bridges between scholars and the inner court, and blurring the contrast in period styles and period concepts between Song and Yuan. Ping Foong, for example, has repackaged the renowned Northern Song professional painter Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1000–ca. 1090) as an intellectual and as an intimate of intellectuals, as the imperial-favorite court artist whose magnificent landscape screens celebrated the emperor’s policies while as a privately commissioned artist he painted poetic and stylistically “intimate” laments for marginalized and unjustly banished bureaucrats. As such, Guo Xi belongs not only at the end of a lineage but equally at the head of another.<sup>66</sup> Martin Powers and Peter Sturman help define that new lineage with studies contrasting “naturalism” versus “naturalness” in tenth–eleventh-century painting in relation to “the competition between court and literati for hegemony in the cultural arena” (Powers), and detailing the rise of an aesthetic in which the “true subject” of a painting would be “neither the studio nor the landscape but a view, a private view, a personal act of seeing” (Sturman, writing of the artist Mi Youren [1075–1151]). Robert Harrist, Elizabeth Brotherton, and Susan Nelson have all helped to broaden the basis for understanding the impact of Su Shi’s contemporary, Li Gonglin 李公麟, on Yuan and later literati painting,<sup>67</sup> and I have tried to imagine something of Su Shi’s own impact as a bridge between Song and Yuan.<sup>68</sup> Julia Murray has studied the interaction between the emergent scholars’ style and early Southern Song



9

Ren Renfa, *Two Horses, Fat and Lean*, early 14th century (Yuan dynasty), handscroll (detail), ink and colors on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing. After *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, 7: *Yuan dai huihua* (Beijing: 1999), p. 80.

court calligraphy in the art of Ma Hezhi 馬和之 (12th century).<sup>69</sup> Yukio Lippit has linked specific Chan Buddhist paintings directly to literati social contacts and stylistic lineages, and especially to the Buddhist works of Li Gonglin (ca. 1049–1106).<sup>70</sup> Alfreda Murck and Valérie Malenfer Ortiz have studied the interplay of painting, poetry, and court politics in themes of scholarly exile such as the “Eight Views of the Xiao-Xiang” landscapes, beginning in the reign of Song emperor Shenzong 神宗, 1067–1085, and continuing into the Yuan in paintings both by scholars and court artists.<sup>71</sup> Hui-shu Lee has marked the personally expressive elements in Southern Song court painting and accompanying poetry, typically cast as an aesthetic against which Yuan scholar-painters reacted but which she regards as immediately preceding and very likely influencing the rise of painting-cum-poetry composition in the fourteenth century.<sup>72</sup> Numerous other examples could be cited, dots that have not yet all been linked to show an emergent new direction but which have already been set down on paper, one by one.

As shown above, throughout much of the twentieth century, views of Song and Yuan painting have both been tied to the concepts of East Asia’s pursuit of modernization but there are two very different visions of that modernity, one linked to realism and realist styles, the other to individualism and so-called expressive styles. Published works on Chinese and Japanese painting in the early twentieth century by Aida Wong, Julia Andrews, and Kuiyi Shen have gone the farthest so far in relating these alternate visions to the quest by Asians themselves to define a distinctly Asian artistic modernity.<sup>73</sup>

Seen over the course of a century, the changing interpretation of the Song-to-Yuan transition is evident and the change itself is dramatic. But how do we account for it? Japanese taste, nationalist motivation, and Japan’s international influence in the early decades of the century have already been credited for much of that early era’s impulse. Accounting for the generation that followed, beginning in mid-century must be more tentative, even if many of these scholars are still with us. But it is a central fact that many of those who created and shaped the American academic tradition as we know it today brought this teaching to American shores direct from China as partisans in the War Against Japan, as Chinese emigrés from a land beset by barbarous politics, revolution and anti-intellectual forces redolent of the Yuan period, or as Americans sent there as liberators. They include young Chinese scholars like Wen Fong, Chu-tsing Li, and Wai-kam Ho, together with American scholars who served in the war theater, like Michael Sullivan and Richard Edwards (both of them non-combatants or pacifists who drove trucks and ambulances), as well as their elders Max Loehr and Gustav Ecke who lived under the Japanese occupation in Beijing and those stationed afterwards in occupied Japan, like Sherman Lee and James Cahill. The specter of Tojo, first, and then Mao Zedong bearing down from

the north bore no small resemblance to that of Chinggis Khan and Khubilai Khan. As paintings by Ni Zan and Dong Qichang 董其昌 came to be banned from exhibition in the People's Republic and the great Confucian and Daoist traditions once again needed defending, they saw in Yuan literati painting a revolutionary response to a profound cultural threat. They mapped their own experience of displacement onto the rhetoric of both Yuan and early Qing *yimin* 遺民 painting and helped elevate anti-Mongol and anti-Manchu loyalist painters to new heights of popularity. The philosophical quietude and lyricism of Southern Song art, so popular in Japan and among an earlier generation of Americans, were compromised by association with political capitulationism, marginalized and rejected as they had previously come to be in the minds of Ming literati.

Now, another half-century later, the anti-Confucianism of some of the early modernists and of the mid-century Communists is past; Chinggis Khan, formerly reviled for his butchery of millions of Chinese, is increasingly regarded in a rising China as a national hero who united China with Mongolia, which is no longer regarded as foreign but as one of China's national minorities. And the passionate defense of traditional culture by those who resisted the assault upon it, assimilated into American academia, is also largely spent. This is an era given to complexity and nuance, wary of the single cause or simple view, postcolonial in outlook (if not post-postcolonial) and alert to the seductive role of class privilege. Craig Clunas has recently written, "Rather than seeing the scholar ideal in painting as synonymous with 'Chinese art,' it may be helpful to see it as only one, albeit socially privileged, type of visibility, coexisting with and interacting with others."<sup>74</sup> And Michael Sullivan has responded to the historiographic argument:

In recent years, as the field widened and deepened, we have seen major shifts in the way in which Western scholars have treated the history of Chinese painting, most strikingly in the rejection of the idea that there was a "revolution" — or at least a major shift of direction — in Yuan painting. This is due largely to the rejection of the traditional Chinese scholars' conviction that, to put it simply, only their kind of art was worth writing about, and the acceptance of the fact that in the huge realm of professional, religious, and portrait painting, no such revolution took place.<sup>75</sup>

Chinese painting history has now entered a phase like that which Panofsky's fellow art historians had fully entered a half-century ago. But today we have no Panofskys. We only have an ever-expanding series of viewpoints to remind us, in the words of historian Peter Novick, of "the relativistic implication of any historicization of belief."<sup>76</sup>



We have a historicized perspective to remind us that the structure of history is not really as simple as a chapter book. As one great American historian, Martin Duberman, once wrote of another, David Potter:

The past, he believes, was no less intricate in its patterns and norms than is the present, and any historian who declares wholeheartedly for a single theme must sacrifice an awareness that paradox and contradiction are distinguishing elements in human history.... To read [Potter] is to become aware of a truth ... that the chief lesson to be derived from a study of the past is that it holds no simple lesson, and that the historian's main responsibility is to prevent anyone from claiming that it does.<sup>77</sup>

And we have the paintings themselves to help us ask, just how revolutionary was this Yuan artwork, and how much was it the fruited harvest of Song creativity?

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## NOTES

Portions of this article appeared in somewhat different form under the title, "The Evolution of a 'Revolution': Unsettled Reflections on the Chinese Art-Historical Mission," *Archives of Asian Art* 55 (2004–2005): 39–52. Yet another rendition was published as "Changing Views of Change: The Song-Yuan Transition in Chinese Painting Histories," in *Asian History in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Vishakha Desai (Williamstown, Mass., and New Haven: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute and Yale University Press, 2007), 40–63.

- 1 Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 29, 7 (quoting C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*), 7, 31. Panofsky's original publication of this material appeared as "Renaissance and Renascences," *Kenyon Review* 6 (1944): 201–36.
- 2 Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, 7.
- 3 Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, 1.
- 4 Max Loehr, "Some Fundamental Issues in the History of Chinese Painting," *Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 2 (February 1964): 188.
- 5 "The focal point of history's concerns is continuity, and continuity implies that elements of sameness persist. Although historians must call attention to the mutations, they must emphasize the elements of continuity. And to grant that continuity within change exists leads necessarily to the conclusion that the elements of continuity are the essentials, of mutation, the incidentals." Oscar Handlin to Merle Curti, June 10, 1947, in Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 391–92.
- 6 "Revolution is not the same thing as social change; it is a form of social change.... One reason why revolutions took place in

these societies [France, Russia, China] is that nonrevolutionary change had already failed—a point that should demonstrate the need to study the more general phenomenon of social change before we can turn to revolution itself." Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 5. Thomas Carlyle: "Not a Hero only is needed, but a world fit for him... the Hero comes almost in vain to it otherwise! ... Not *Hunger* alone produced even the French Revolution; no, but the feeling of the insupportable all-pervading *Falsehood* which had now embodied itself in *Hunger*." Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 210–11, 216.

- 7 "In the face of the vast and essential differences between political and scientific development, what parallelism can justify the metaphor that finds revolutions in both? ... Political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow subdivision of the scientific community, that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and scientific development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution." Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 92. Although its historical accuracy is no longer widely accepted, not even by the author himself,

- Kuhn's model remains influential; see Steve Fuller, *Thomas Kuhn: A Philosophical History for Our Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Thomas Kuhn, *The Road Since "Structure"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- 8 The terms "revolution" and "revolutionary" do not appear until much later in the *Journals of the Continental Congress*. The English Thomas Paine, the one true revolutionary among the Founding Fathers and not entirely one of them, rarely used the term "revolution" to describe the war itself while it was still in progress (once, in his tract "To the Inhabitants of America," March 21, 1778), although he repeatedly conceived that British misconduct of the war might possibly lead to revolution in England. In the end, he revolutionized his own popular phrase, writing that "'The times that tried men's souls' are over — and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew is gloriously and happily accomplished." "Thoughts on the Peace, and the Probable Advantages Thereof," April 19, 1783 (*The American Crises*, 13), in *Common Sense and Other Writings*, ed. Gordon Wood (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 91. The earliest published use I have found from among other leaders came from Benjamin Franklin, April 18, 1782, a half-year after Yorktown, by which time it had become "the late revolution." *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, V, *Franklin's Journal*, ed. Francis Wharton (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 540–41.
  - 9 Max Loehr, *Chinese Painting After Sung* (New Haven: Yale Art Gallery, 1967), unpaginated, first text page.
  - 10 Sherman Lee, *Chinese Landscape Painting* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1962), 39.
  - 11 Sherman Lee and Wen Fong, *Streams and Mountains Without End: A Northern Sung Handscroll and Its Significance in the History of Early Chinese Painting* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1955), writing of the "revolutionary developments of the ... Yuan dynasty" (21). Lee's *Chinese Landscape Painting* would soon afterwards write of Yuan painting's "real, and even revolutionary, originality" (39).
  - 12 James Cahill, *Chinese Painting* (Lausanne: Skira, 1960), 105; Michael Sullivan, *An Introduction to Chinese Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 169.
  - 13 Chu-tsing Li, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains: A Landscape by Chao Meng-fu* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1965), 59; this monograph grew out of a paper delivered at a Princeton seminar taught by Wen Fong in 1960. Wen Fong (with catalogue by Marilyn Fu), *Sung and Yuan Painting* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973), 88, chapter on "Chao Meng-fu's Revolution": "It was Zhao Mengfu ... who in seeking a reappraisal of calligraphy and painting through the study of ancient models, caused a permanent revolution in Chinese painting."
  - 14 Cahill, *Chinese Painting*, 105: "Qian Xuan, Zhao Mengfu, and Gao Kegong, with some of their contemporaries, inaugurated a new era in Chinese painting. In order to accomplish this, they undertook a revolution of style that was in part destructive, involving the casting-off of outworn and uncongenial modes that sometimes must attend epochs." Sullivan, *Introduction to Chinese Art*, 169: "A gratifying number of great paintings of the Yuan Dynasty have survived to testify to the remarkable revolution by which these and other gifted men broke free from the conventions of Southern Song and set Chinese painting upon a new path."
  - 15 Raphael Petrucci, *Chinese Painters: A Critical Study*, translated by Frances Seaver (New York: Brentano's, 1920), 76; original publication, *Peintres chinois*, (Paris: H. Laurens, 1912).
  - 16 Stephen Bushell, *Chinese Art* (London: Wyman and Sons for His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), II, 134. For biographical notes on Bushell, see Nick Pearce, *Photographs of Peking, China 1861–1908: An Inventory and Description of the Yetts Collection of Durham: Through Peking With a Camera* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), especially 44–47.
  - 17 Herbert A. Giles, *An Introduction to the History of Chinese Pictorial Art* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1905 [1st edition]); Friedrich Hirth, *Scraps From a Collector's Note Book, Being Notes on Some Chinese Painters of the Present Dynasty with Appendices on Some Old Masters and Art Historians* (Leiden and New York: Otto Harrassowitz and G. E. Stechert, 1905); Laurence Binyon, *Painting in the Far East: An Introduction to the History of Pictorial Art in Asia Especially China and Japan* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908).
  - 18 Binyon, *Painting in the Far East*, 147; Binyon, *Painting in the Far East: An Introduction to the History of Pictorial Art in Asia Especially China and Japan*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Edward Arnold and Longman's, Green & Co., 1913), 159.
  - 19 Aida Yuen Wong, "The East, Nationalism, and Taishō Democracy: Naitō Konan's History of Chinese Painting," *Sino-Japanese Studies* 11, no. 2 (May 1999): 3–23; for a brief outline of this generation in Japan, see Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, "Japanese Art History 2001: The State and Stakes of Research," *Art Bulletin* 83, no. 1 (2001): 111–15.
  - 20 Ernest Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 2:2.



- 21 Kang Youwei, *Wan Mu Caotang yigao* 萬木草堂遺稿 (Posthumous Manuscripts of the Thatched Hut Among Myriad Trees), in Lawrence Wu, "Kang Youwei and the Westernization of Modern Chinese Art," *Orientations* 21, no. 3 (March 1990): 49.
- 22 Kang Youwei, *Wan Mu Caotang yigao*, and Kang Youwei, *Ouzhou shiyi guo youji* 歐洲十一過遊記 (Travels in eleven European countries), in Wu, "Kang Youwei," 47–49.
- 23 Petrucci, *Chinese Painters*, 112–14.
- 24 Arthur Waley, *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting* (London: E. Benn, 1923), 246.
- 25 It is representative of Freer's taste that he preferred a minor, richly colored blue-and-green hand scroll that he considered Song but which is now readily understood to be later Ming, to his own *Pavilion of Rising Clouds* hanging scroll that is now as close as we can get to an original Mi Fu 米芾 composition. For these two works, the former of which was attributed to the early twelfth-century artist Fang Chunnian 方椿年, see Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy in Art* (Washington, D.C., and New York: Freer Gallery of Art/Smithsonian Institution and Harry N. Abrams, 1993), figs. 53, 54. Freer's association with Fenollosa is also discussed in this volume. For the Qian Xuan painting, see fig. 163.
- 26 Alfred Salmony, *Die Chinesische Landschaftsmalerei* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1920), 13.
- 27 Ludwig Bachhofer, *A Short History of Chinese Art* (New York: Pantheon, 1946), 117.
- 28 Fenollosa, 2:53.
- 29 Petrucci, *Chinese Painters*, 112.
- 30 Paul Smith, "Problematising the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 2003); Joshua Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitō Konan (1866–1934)* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs and Harvard University Press, 1984); Aida Yuen [Wong], "Inventing Eastern Art in Japan and China, ca. 1890s to ca. 1930s" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1999), especially chapter 3, regarding Naitō's views on art; Wong, "The East, Nationalism, and Taishō Democracy"; Aida Yuen-Wong, "A New Life for Literati Painting in the Early Twentieth Century: Eastern Art and Modernity, A Transcultural Narrative," *Artibus Asiae* 60, no. 2 (2000): 297–324.
- 31 Wong, "The East, Nationalism, and Taishō Democracy," 5.
- 32 Aida Yuen Wong writes that "Ōmura was arguably the most authoritative interpreter of Chinese art history in Japan. But perhaps his 'China odor' proved a bit acrid for Japanese nostrils to bear and perhaps his empiricism seemed somewhat old-fashioned; in any case, Ōmura's scholarship somehow failed to garner the praise he deserved in his native country. To Chinese readers, by contrast, his sinophilism was well appreciated from the outset, for it signaled a deference to Chinese perspectives that was found lacking in most other foreign scholarship. In Early Republican China, while almost no one had heard of Okakura or Fenollosa, every serious student of Chinese art owned a copy of or had at least leafed through [Ōmura's] *Zhongguo meishu shi* 中國美術史 (History of Chinese Fine Art)." Aida Yuen Wong, *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 40.
- 33 Pan Tianshou, *Zhongguo huihua shi* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1936). See also Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 46, and more broadly 41–48; Wong emphasizes that Pan Tianshou's tripartite periodization was derived from the precedent of Nakamura Fusetsu and Kojika Seiun's *Shina kaiga shi* 支那繪畫史 (History of Chinese painting, 1913), which artist-scholar Chen Hengke 陳衡恪 "had used ... as the basis for his lectures at the Beijing Fine Arts Academy," 45–46.
- 34 Pan Tianshou also gave broad recognition to the diversity of genres and styles in both Song and Yuan, and unlike many Western writers did not overlook the temple painting traditions, so while he acknowledged the contrast between the "refined and luxurious" of high Tang and Song painting and the "schematic and idiosyncratic" in Yuan painting, he also concluded that "While we cannot forget that in our country's history of painting there was progress here [in the Yuan], still the painters at the outset of the Yuan like Qian Xuan, Zhao Mengfu, Liu Guandao 劉貫道 and others, lofty and refined, antique in spirit, preserved that which had its origins in the Song; while at the same time Gao Kegong 高克恭 and others who emphasized conceptual painting and favored spirit-resonance, took up the robe and begging bowl of the two Mi, Dong [Yuan] 董源, and Ju[ran] 巨然 [of the Song] and developed them further, pursuing a kind of liberation in order to gradually achieve the so-called 'Yuan style.' So they really never cast off the accomplishments of the Song." Tianshou, *Zhongguo huihua shi*, 37–38.
- 35 Canadian-born and a U.S. citizen, John Calvin Ferguson (1866–1945) had an extraordinary career as secretary to the Chinese Minister of Commerce, to the Imperial Chinese Railway Administration, and to the Ministry of Posts and Communication, as delegate and

- representative of the Chinese government on numerous missions including one to President Theodore Roosevelt, and later as founder and president of the institutions that became Nanjing University and of Nanyang College, in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s. See Thomas Lawton, *A Time of Transition: Two Collectors of Chinese Art* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Lawrence Museum of Art, 1991); also, Warren Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 62–72.
- 36 John C. Ferguson, *Survey of Chinese Art* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1939), 53.
- 37 “As I have observed for years the Boston Museum is entirely under Japanese influence in its opinions of Chinese art and it is my earnest hope that the Metropolitan Museum will divorce itself from this method.” John C. Ferguson to Robert W. DeForest, Dec. 6, 1912; Metropolitan Museum Archives. I am grateful for this to Lara Netting, graduate student at Princeton University, whose dissertation research is on Ferguson’s art and public service.
- 38 John C. Ferguson, *Outlines of Chinese Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1919), 2.
- 39 Ferguson, *Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 150, 139.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 143, 144.
- 42 Osvald Sirén, *A History of Later Chinese Painting* (London: Medici Society, 1938), 1:6.
- 43 J. P. Dubosc, “A New Approach to Chinese Painting,” *Oriental Art* 3, no. 2 (Autumn 1950): 54.
- 44 Laurence Sickman and Alexander C. Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1956), 162. Sickman’s co-author Soper, on the other hand, wrote caustically of the Yuan architectural enterprise: “Like the other official arts, architecture under barbarian control lapsed into stagnation.... The Tartars or Mongols of the ruling class were hunters, warriors, and administrators at their best, and lazy debauchees at their worst.... The Yuan survivors are neither rare nor individually so interesting, and so may be treated merely as a postscript to the Song.” p. 269.
- 45 Walter Benjamin, “Chinese Paintings at the Bibliothèque Nationale,” in Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael Jennings, Brigid Dogherty, and Thomas Levin (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2008), 257, 259 (originally published in January 1938). Cf. Osvald Sirén, *An Exhibition of Chinese Paintings in the National Museum, Stockholm, April–May 1936* (Stockholm: Nordisk Rotogravyr, 1936).
- 46 Lenin’s *State and Revolution* of 1917 was directed to those who failed to appreciate this difference and took its lead from Engels’ classic diatribe against the utopian socialist-scientist Eugen Dühring, who rejected Darwin’s struggle for survival and the Hegelian dialectic and anticipated a gradual withering away of all power-based relationships: “To emasculate Marxism in such a manner [as Dühring has] is to reduce it to opportunism, for such an ‘interpretation’ only leaves the hazy conception of a slow, even, gradual change, free from leaps and storms, free from revolution. The current popular conception, if one may say so, of the ‘withering away’ of the state undoubtedly means a slurring over, if not a negation, of revolution.... The necessity of systematically fostering among the masses this and just this point of view about violent revolution lies at the root of the whole of Marx’s and Engels’ teaching.... The replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state, i.e., of all states is only possible through ‘withering away.’” V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (New York: International Publishers, 1932), 16, 20.
- 47 In March 1927, Mao wrote that to succeed, a revolution must be “like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back.” Mao Zedong, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1975), vol. I, 24.
- 48 “He who believes that some ancient form was transformed suddenly, through an internal force or tendency into, for instance, one furnished with wings, will be almost compelled to assume, in opposition to all analogy, that many individuals varied simultaneously [in this same fashion, in order to breed]. It cannot be denied that such abrupt and great changes of structure are widely different from those which most species apparently have undergone.... He will be forced to admit that these great and sudden transformations have left no trace of their action on the embryo. To admit all this is, as it seems to me, to enter into the realms of miracle, and to leave those of Science.” Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 316 (from chapter 7, not published until the 6th edition).
- 49 Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 115–19. The modern word “*geming*” itself had origins in the change (*ge*, derived from: the skin of an animal, to molt, to flay) of Heaven’s mandate (*tian ming* 天命) from a dynastic line grown corrupt to one that was pure. Theoretically, Heaven’s favor could not be won by violent rebellion. According to the

- oldest-known use of the term *ge ming* in the *Shu jing* 書經 or *Classic of History*, it is only that “Heaven inclines” and “the people respond” toward the good ruler’s moral virtue. The forty-ninth hexagram of the *Yi jing* 易經 or *Book of Changes* goes by this title *ge*, the commentary explaining that the founding rulers Tang of the Shang-Yin dynasty and Wu of the Zhou “changed the mandate, complied with Heaven, and the people responded.” In contrast to some modern translations of this hexagram as “revolution” or “rebellion,” James Legge’s 1882 translation refers only to “change” and remarks, “It is assumed in the Tuan [the ancient Judgment] that change is viewed by people generally with suspicion and dislike, and should not be made hastily.” James Legge, *The I Ching: The Book of Changes* (New York: Dover, 1963), 169. The oldest use of the term, found in the *Shu jing* or *Classic of History*, elaborates that “This was not Heaven holding anything personal toward the Shang [ruler], only that Heaven inclined toward his virtue [his *de*]; not that the Shang [ruler] sought anything from the people, only that the people responded toward his virtue.” Compare James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, III: The Shoo King or the Book of Historical Documents* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 216.
- 50 See, for example Liu Xie, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, translated by Vincent Yu-chung Shih (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 102, 159, 166–67, 233–34; and Maureen Robertson, “Periodization in the Arts and Patterns of Change in Traditional Chinese Literary History,” in Susan Bush and Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 3–26.
- 51 Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, translated by William Acker, *Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 179. Su Shi, translated in Wen Fong, “Why Chinese Painting Is History,” 267; see also Peter Bol, “*This Culture of Ours*”: *Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 295.
- 52 Diana Yeongchau Chou, “Appraising Art in the Early Yuan Dynasty: A Study of Descriptive Criteria and Their Literary Context in Tang Hou’s (1250s–1310s) *Huajian* (Examination of Painting),” *Monumenta Serica* 52 (2004): 267.
- 53 Diana Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou’s Huajian (Examination of Painting): Cultivating Taste in Yuan China (1279–1368)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2005), 105.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 151–52.
- 56 Ankeney Weitz, *Zhou Mi’s Record of Clouds and Mist Passing Before One’s Eyes: An Annotated Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 13, 18.
- 57 Ankeney Weitz, “Notes on the Early Yuan Antique Art Market in Hangzhou,” *Ars Orientalis* 27 (1997): 31.
- 58 Diana Chou, 105–6.
- 59 Ankeney Weitz, “Zhao Mengfu and his Atelier” (lecture, delivered at “Perspectives on Chinese Art: New Approaches and Reflections on Forty Years of Scholarship, A Conference in Honor of Dr. Chu-tsing Li,” Arizona State University, Tempe, Ariz., November 2005).
- 60 Deborah Del Gais Muller, “Hsia Wen-yen and His *T’u-Hui Pao-Chien* (*Precious Mirror of Painting*),” *Ars Orientalis* 18 (1988): 140.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 139 (Muller’s italics).
- 62 *Ibid.*, 139.
- 63 Maggie Bickford, “The Painting of Flowers and Birds in Sung-Yüan China,” in Maxwell Hearn and Judith Smith, eds., *Arts of the Sung and Yüan* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 294.
- 64 No longer new, this was the subject of my very first published article: Jerome Silbergeld, “A New Look at Traditionalism in Yüan Dynasty Landscape Painting,” *National Palace Museum Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 1–29. See also Richard Barnhart, “A Lost Horizon: Painting in Hangzhou After the Fall of the Song,” in Barnhart, *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1993), 21–51.
- 65 See, for example, Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), catalogue numbers 7, 38, 64, 93, 101, 108, 120, 124, 125, 145.
- 66 Ping Foong, “Guo Xi’s Intimate Landscapes and the Case of *Old Trees, Level Distance*,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 35 (2000): 87–115; Ping Foong, “Monumental and Intimate Landscape by Guo Xi” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2005).
- 67 Robert Harrist, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China: Mountain Villa by Li Gonglin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 114: “Copies of paintings by Li Gonglin continued to proliferate during the Yuan dynasty, when Zhao Mengfu, Qian Xuan, Zhang Wu 張渥, and other artists made Li’s style the basis of their own.” Elizabeth Brotherton, “Beyond the Written Word: Li Gonglin’s Illustrations to Tao Yuanming’s *Returning Home*,” *Artibus Asiae* 59, no. 3/4 (2000): 225–63. Susan Nelson, “Catching Sight of South Mountain: Tao Yuanming, Mount Lu, and the Iconographies of Escape,” *Archives of Asian Art* 52 (2000/2001): 11–43.
- 68 Jerome Silbergeld, “Back to the Red Cliff: Reflections on the Narrative Mode in Early Literati Landscape Painting,” *Ars Orientalis* 25 (1995), 19–38.



- 69 Julia Murray, *Ma Hezhi and the Illustration of the Book of Odes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 70 Yukio Lippit, "Apparition Painting," in *Bridges to Heaven Essays on East Asian Art in Honor of Professor Wen C. Fong*, ed. Jerome Silbergeld, Dora Ching, Alfreda Murck, and Judith Smith (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).
- 71 Alfreda Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center and Harvard University Press, 2000); Valerie Malenfer Ortiz, *Dreaming the Southern Song Landscape* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).
- 72 Hui-shu Lee, "Art and Imperial Images at the Late Southern Sung Court," in *Arts of the Sung and Yüan*, ed. Maxwell Hearn and Judith Smith (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 249–69.
- 73 See notes 19, 30, 32.
- 74 Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 143.
- 75 In Jason Kuo, ed., *Discovering Chinese Painting: Dialogues with American Art Historians* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 2nd edition, forthcoming). Contributors to this volume include Julia Andrews, James Cahill, Richard Edwards, Jason Kuo, Julia Murray, Martin Powers, Jerome Silbergeld, Michael Sullivan, and Richard Vinograd; James Elkins contributes an essay entitled, "What Is Chinese About Chinese Art History?" (Answer: not too much.)
- 76 Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 546.
- 77 Martin Duberman, "Review of *The South and Sectional Conflict* by David M. Potter," *New York Times*, January 12, 1969, book review section, 14.



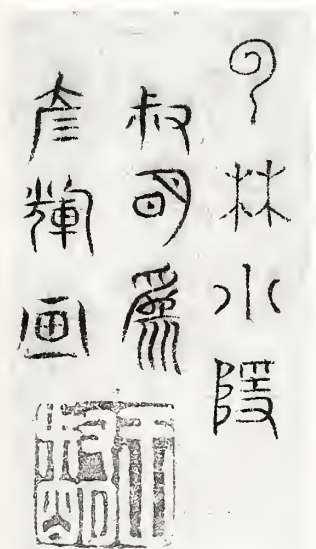
# FROM THE CLEAR AND DISTANT LANDSCAPE OF WUXING TO THE HUMBLE HERMIT OF CLOUDS AND WOODS

## Abstract

On the occasion of the one-day conference “New Directions in Yuan Painting,” held at the University of Pennsylvania Museum on December 2, 2006, six remarkable Yuan dynasty paintings belonging to a private collection were exhibited, together with several later paintings from the museum’s own collection. The three most impressive and astonishing of the Yuan paintings were: the never-recorded and never-published joint handscroll, *Orchids and Bamboo*, by the husband and wife Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) and Guan Daosheng (1262–1319); and two scrolls known to art history but long thought to be lost: a handscroll mounted with two separate versions of *The Thatched Hut at Liangchang* by Wang Yuan (ca. 1280–after 1349) and Zhu Derun (1294–1365) respectively; and *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, a handscroll by Wang Meng (ca. 1308–1385).<sup>1</sup> This essay focuses on Wang Meng’s painting.

PREVIOUSLY, THE WANG MENG HANDSCROLL, *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods* (fig. 1), was neither widely documented in traditional sources nor fully published in more recent ones. Briefly mentioned in some seventeenth-century catalogues, the painting was inscribed in 1748 by the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735–96) and bears his collector seals but was not recorded in the official catalogue of the imperial collection.<sup>2</sup> By the late nineteenth century, the scroll was evidently in private hands, and the collector Lu Xinyuan (1834–1894) provided the first detailed account of it in the supplement to his painting catalogue.<sup>3</sup> More recently, images of the work were published in 1935 from photographs collected by Ōmura Seigai (1868–1927), and again in 1957 by Xie Zhiliu (1910–1997), but both publications partially reproduced preexisting photographs and neither author had seen the actual work.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the present reappearance of the original scroll is truly surprising in its richness and beauty.

I have had the privilege of thoroughly examining the scroll in the home of the current owner. The three short columns written in seal script at the upper right of the painting read, “The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods, painted by Shuming for Yanhui,” followed by a square intaglio seal impression with the text: *Wang Shuming* (fig. 2). Judging from this inscription and seal, we learn that the artist Wang Meng, whose courtesy name was Shuming, painted the handscroll for his first cousin once removed, Cui Sheng, who had the courtesy name Yanhui.<sup>5</sup> On a separate sheet of paper attached to the left of the painting, Wang Meng appended his poem “Lyrics of Clouds and Woods,” written in a visually impressive block of running standard script nearly five-hundred characters in length, at the end of which is the same square intaglio seal impression seen on the painting (fig. 3). In



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1  
Wang Meng (ca. 1308–1385), *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, 1375–78, handscroll. Private collection.

2  
Wang Meng, detail showing title and signature in seal script, on *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, fig. 1.



黃鶴山中人為雲林生賦其詞曰

樛木輪囷離魁糾搏而相軋兮綠葉披靡蘿薜而威蕤兮葩葩紺碧縹緲而錯揉兮嘉實疊偉鱗次厚乘於標枝羣采的皪激射澤其晃曜兮奇蔭蒼蒸樛欒物其瘳飢巖抄上干乎曾霄兮艦抵又下廡乎漣漪鵲羣林而叢生乎汲玉兮迺芳時又覺艷乎華姿架空聲而曄其藻井承宇兮稍迴巖豆耀乎羅帷薄檻乘拱株儒櫺之巧妙兮又惡可擬其雅潔而雕靡舉世之奇觀無足易吾目兮窮海外之薰臭寧可以奪余之顛知飛泉冷三貫八音而盈耳兮鸞鳥鳳凰聲布迷而娛嬉清風導珠靈而下兮白雲從而來下鼓翠濤而經糾乎瓊枝兮若龍虬之軒舞萬變倏忽之列吾前兮張角抵魚龍之戲不足以喻其曼曼踈踈躑躅之訕侮非苟高世虛懷之觀心同乎蒼園兮莫不膽掉倏伸裂昔而夢于中有一士綠髮而瓊肌兮茹芝而飲水騰充實而弗飢兮目眇徠而流采經瑤瑟之淒清兮令人掩耳不能聽彼同乎太虛之罔象兮匪寓世而垂情歌要眇而停雲兮如聆笙韶於廣庭希世之音拂雲林而上干乎丹霄兮激天籟之冷三歌曰

心乎留者冥三兮莫余汨希余音道曠莫兮默而深世隔闕兮孰余尋怡懽泊兮栖雲林雲何注兮來何從林密兮花濛三余欲長注兮誰或餘從懷葛天氏之上古兮緼朱絃而奏遺風

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Wang Meng, "Lyrics for Clouds and Woods," in running-standard script, colophon attached to *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, fig. 1.

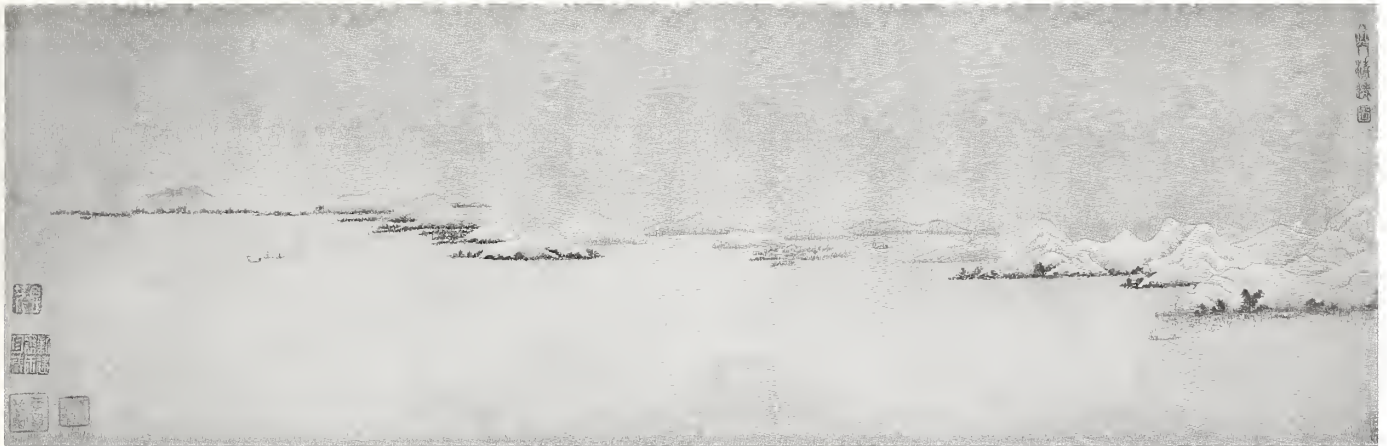
addition, from the frontispiece through the various colophons following Wang Meng's "Lyrics," a total of twenty-seven late Yuan and early Ming dynasty contemporaries of Cui Sheng wrote texts for the scroll. Following these are colophons by the later Ming scholars and collectors Wang Shizhen (1526–1590), Dong Qichang (1555–1636), and Zhang Jinchen (late 16th–early 17th century), and the modern figure Zhang Jian (1853–1926). In addition, collector seals on the scroll indicate that prior to entering the Qing imperial collection in the mid-eighteenth century, the scroll had already passed through the hands of the collectors Liang Qingbiao (1620–1691) and An Qi (1683–after 1744). Taken together with Lu Xinyuan's publication in the nineteenth century, the documentation that appears on the scroll thus shows that the painting was known and appreciated over the last four hundred years by a continuous succession of important connoisseurs.

Wang Meng's first cousin once removed, Cui Sheng, for whom he painted *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, was the son of his cousin Cui Fu (1318–1355), whose name brings to mind a handscroll in the Shanghai Museum.<sup>6</sup> The Shanghai scroll includes a painting by Zhao Mengfu, as well as a direct copy of that painting titled *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing* by Cui Fu and a transcription by Zhao Yi of Zhao Mengfu's "Account of the Painting: *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*," both of which were mounted together by none other than Cui Sheng (figs. 4–6).<sup>7</sup> Attached to the end of *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing* are seventeen colophons by contemporaries of Cui Sheng, of which nine were written by some of the same individuals who added colophons to *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, namely: Xu Yikui (1318–ca. 1400), Wang Yu, Hu Longcheng, Zhang Shi, Bao Xun, Yu He (1307–1382), Zhao Ding, Zhang Yu, and Zhou Fang. The wealth of information contained in these colophons provides a new art historical understanding of these paintings, both individually and collectively, and reveals previously unknown facts about two fourteenth-century families — the Zhaos of Wuxing and the Cuis of Hangzhou — who, over the course of four generations from the early Yuan dynasty to the beginning of the Ming, went from being prominent officials to recluses living in seclusion among the hills and woods.

Starting from Zhao Mengfu and his friend Cui Jinzhi, close relations between the Zhao and Cui families extended over four generations (see Appendix), as is



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Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, undated, handscroll, 24.9 x 88.5 cm. Shanghai Museum.

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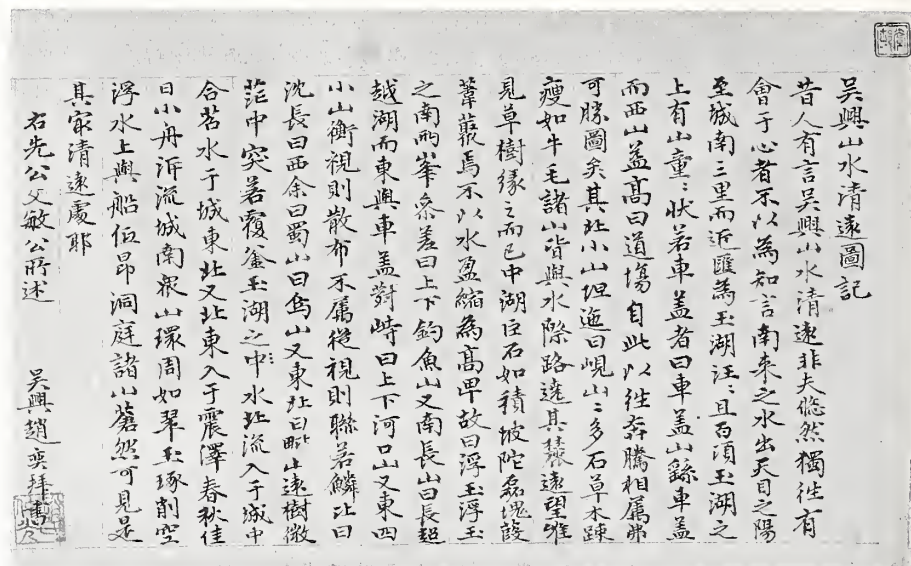
Cui Fu (1318–1355), *Copy of Zhao Mengfu's Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, undated, fig. 4. Shanghai Museum.

clearly illuminated in Zhang Yu's colophon for Cui Fu's copy of *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*:

At right is the painting *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, which is a copy made by Cui Fu from Qiantang. Fu's grandfather-in-law, Duke Zhao Wenmin [Zhao Mengfu], also known as Songxue, had previously painted the composition and written a descriptive account [*ji*], he entrusted the painting to his son Yong [1291–1361], who served in the Academy of Scholarly Worthies. As Fu was Yong's son-in-law, he obtained the painting and made a copy of it, but did not have [time] to mount [his copy] as a handscroll before he passed away. [Yong's] younger brother Yi was a gifted [calligrapher] in the Zhao-family style and, since he was maternal great-uncle to [Cui] Fu's son Sheng, he was asked [by Sheng] to add [a transcription of Zhao Mengfu's] descriptive account [to Cui Fu's painting] in order to fulfill his father's intention.

Master Cui [Fu's] grandfather was a gentleman in retirement called Jinzhi, who came from one of Qiantang's great families. Fond of antiquity and broadly cultured, he was Duke Wenmin's oldest friend, and whenever the duke came to Hangzhou, he would stay with [Cui]. The [two] families decreed that Zhao Yong's first daughter should be wife to [Jinzhi's] grandson Fu, and to the present the Cui and Zhao families have indeed been in-





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Zhao Yi (active mid- to late 14th century), transcription of Zhao Mengfu's "Account of the Painting: *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*," colophon, attached to Cui Fu's *Copy of Zhao Mengfu's Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, fig. 5

laws for all of four generations! ... I am an old family friend of the Cui and Zhao families, and have written this [colophon] at the end of [Zhao Yi's transcription of Zhao Mengfu's] descriptive account as a testament for future generations of both families ... your elderly family friend, Zhang Yu of Luling ... in spring, the third lunar month of the twentieth year in the Zhizheng reign period [1360]. (fig. 7)

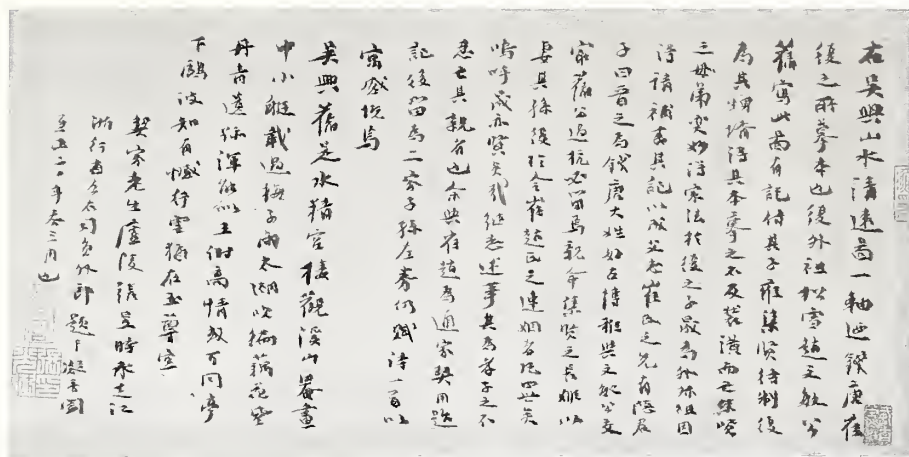
Twenty-one years later, between the fifth and tenth lunar months of the *xinyou* year in the Hongwu reign period (1381), the same Zhang Yu who wrote the above colophon for *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing* inscribed a poem for Cui Sheng at the end of *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods* scroll, identifying himself again as "your elderly family friend."<sup>8</sup> As Zhang Yu's own close relations with the Cui and Zhao families thus clearly extended over several generations, his comments about the paintings by Zhao Mengfu and Cui Fu and the relationship of the two families may be taken as accurate.

In his colophon, Zhang Yu identified Cui Jinzhi as Zhao Mengfu's oldest friend, and called him a "gentleman in retirement," who was "fond of antiquity and broadly cultured." Supporting evidence for these statements can readily be found in a number of Zhao's other extant works, such as the following three examples.

First is an undated letter by Zhao Mengfu to Cui Jinzhi.<sup>9</sup> In a note below the third column of the letter, Zhao Mengfu wrote: "Please trouble Wang Chengzhi to get back my Han-dynasty pot from Shen Zhu, and to get back my *qin* [zither] from Ye Lanpo." From this, one may surmise that — just like Wang Chengzhi, Shen Zhu, and Ye Lanpo — Cui Jinzhi was the kind of gentleman around Hangzhou at the time, whom one might call "fond of antiquity and broadly cultured," and he may have been part of the same circle of local scholar-collectors as the other named men. As an interesting aside, the Wang Chengzhi named in Zhao Mengfu's note was apparently the original owner of the joint handscroll, *Orchids and Bamboo*, by Zhao Mengfu and Guan Daosheng, also displayed at University of Pennsylvania Museum.<sup>10</sup>

The second piece of evidence is a 1316 handscroll by Zhao Mengfu dedicated to Cui Jinzhi.<sup>11</sup> Over a two-day period in April 1316, the sixty-two-year-old Zhao





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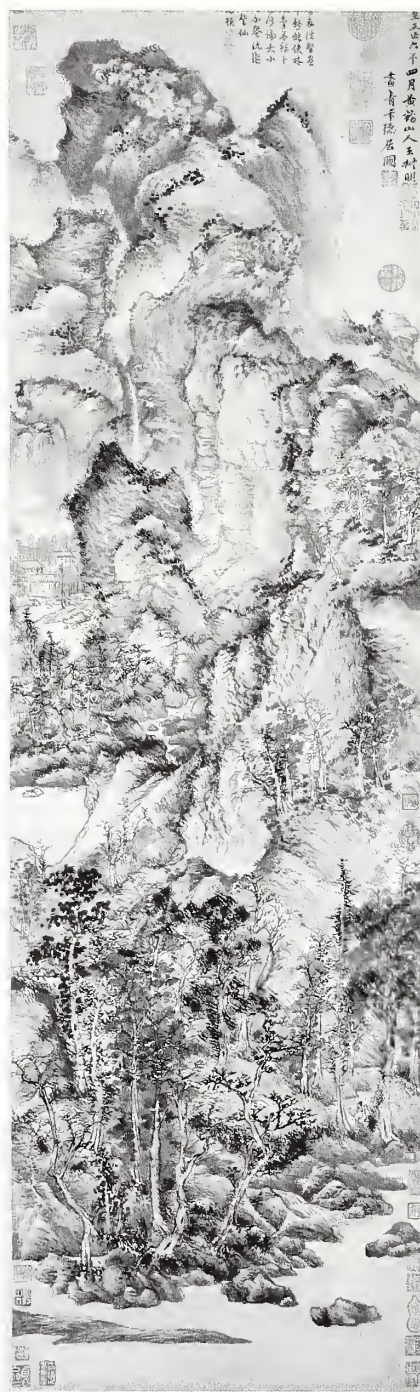
Zhang Yu (late 13th–the 3rd quarter of 14th century), colophon, 1360, attached to Cui Fu's *Copy of Zhao Mengfu's Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*.

Mengfu painted a portrait of Laozi in the *baimiao* (plain outline) style for the front of the scroll, and then transcribed the entire text of the *Daodejing* (*The Way and its Power*), executing it in a small standard script that is completely uniform from start to finish—a tour de force of skill and concentration. Zhao Mengfu's signature at the end of the scroll reads: “In the third year of the Yanyou reign period, with the year-star in *bingchen*, on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth days of the third lunar month [April 16–17, 1316], written by [Zhao] Mengfu at the Pine Snow Studio for the lofty scholar [Cui] Jinzhi.” The term “lofty scholar” used here indicates that Cui Jinzhi was living in retirement, while the subject of the scroll suggests his interest in philosophical Daoism.

Third is a 1319 letter by Zhao Mengfu to Cui Jinzhi.<sup>12</sup> Some two months after the death of his wife Guan Daosheng on May 29, 1319, Zhao Mengfu sent a letter to Cui Jinzhi—addressed “to my dear friend Supervisor Jinzhi” and dated the fourth day of the seventh lunar month (July 21)—in which he wrote: “As we’ve been friends for more than twenty years, and I have always received great kindness [from you], I deeply hoped that you would come [to Wuxing], so that I might recount the sufferings of my heart. Yet you still have not come, and I choke up just thinking about you as I write this page.” From this, one can see the depth and intimacy of the friendship between the two men.

Because of the close relationship between Zhao Mengfu and Cui Jinzhi, when children of each were about to have babies in the same year (1318), the elderly friends betrothed their respective grandchildren in the womb, without even knowing their gender. Years later, well after both men had passed away, Zhao Yong’s oldest daughter Zhao Shuduan (1318–1373) did in fact marry Cui Jinzhi’s grandson Cui Fu, who was born in the same year. In turn, Cui Fu and Zhao Shuduan had two sons and three daughters. Their first son died prematurely, and the second son was Cui Sheng (*zi Yanhui*), who married a daughter of the Gong family. As a measure of their character and abilities, Cui Fu was said to be “a good student and skilled in painting,” while his son Cui Sheng was “incorrupt and careful, good at seal and clerical scripts, and brought praise to his family name.”<sup>13</sup>

According to Zhang Yu’s colophon above, Zhao Mengfu gave the painting, *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, to his son Zhao Yong, whose son-in-law Cui Fu subsequently saw it and made a copy. After Cui Fu’s death, his son Sheng asked his maternal great uncle Zhao Yi to transcribe Zhao Mengfu’s descriptive



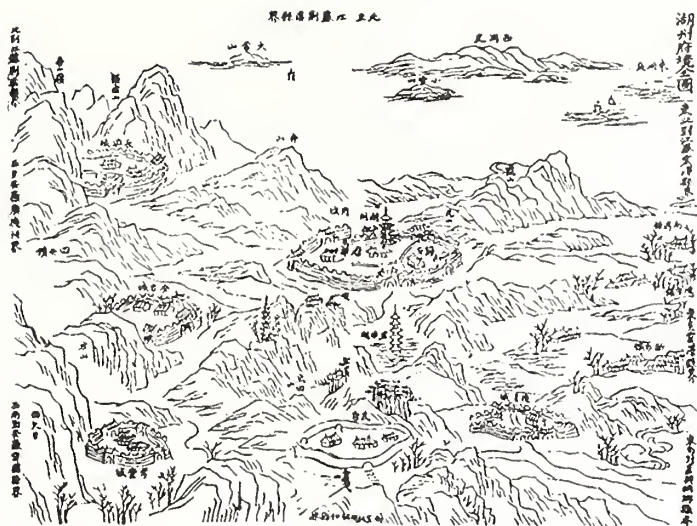
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Wang Meng, *Dwelling in Seclusion on Qingbian Mountain*, 1366, hanging scroll, 140.6 x 42.2 cm. Shanghai Museum.

account of the original painting. As Cui Fu died in 1355 and Zhang Yu's colophon was written in 1360, Zhao Yi must have transcribed the text at some point between those years.<sup>14</sup> Through Cui Sheng's familiarity with his father's copy of the painting and the text of Zhao Mengfu's descriptive account, the idea of *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing* most likely made a very deep impression on him during this time.

In the twenty-sixth year of the Zhizheng reign period (1366), Cui Sheng's first cousin once removed Wang Meng painted *Dwelling in Seclusion on Qingbian Mountain* for Cui Sheng's uncle Zhao Lin (active mid-14th century), the son of Zhao



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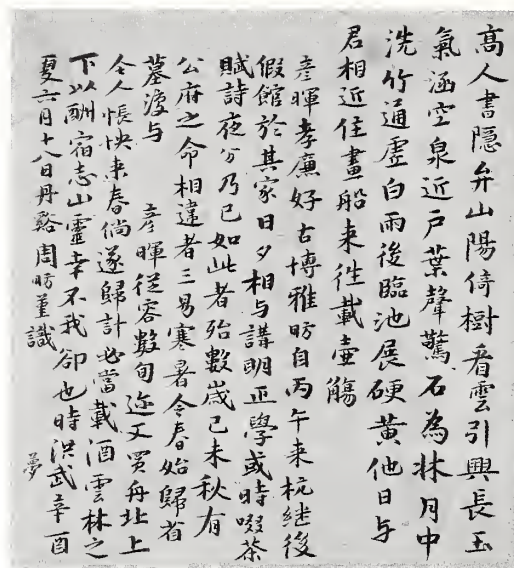
From *Huzhou fuzhi* 湖州府志, 1874.  
In *Huzhou fujing quantu* 湖州府境  
全圖, vol. 1.

Yong (fig. 8).<sup>15</sup> Qingbian Mountain (or just Bian Mountain) is located a short distance northwest of Wuxing, the ancestral home of the Zhao family, and is the most prominent physical feature in the vicinity (fig. 9). In his poem “Roaming to Bian Mountain,” Zhao Mengfu wrote: “Wandering freely, I find a place to stop / Where the forest trees are desolate and still / No need for me to strum my plain white zither / For the hills and streams make their own limpid song;” and in “Roaming Again to Bian Mountain,” he said: “I’ve come again to this desolate place / That it may bring me comfort for awhile.”<sup>16</sup> Qingbian Mountain overlooks the southwestern part of Lake Tai, and from it one can see all the way to the mountainous Dongting islands lying off the far northern shore. This may well be the very place, then, of which Zhao Mengfu rhetorically asked in his descriptive account of *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*: “As one can see [from here] the Dongting mountains, darkly green, is this not the best place from which to get a clear and distant view?”

Naturally, Cui Sheng was no stranger to the poems on Qingbian Mountain by his maternal great grandfather Zhao Mengfu, or to the painting, *Dwelling in Seclusion on Qingbian Mountain*, that Wang Meng had made for his uncle Zhao Lin. At this particular time, however, he was still living at home in Hangzhou and studying to earn the designation *xiaolian* (filial and incorrupt), which would recommend him for consideration in government employment. As Zhou Fang wrote in the postscript to his poem inscribed on *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*:

The Filial and Incorrupt Yanhui [Cui Sheng] is fond of antiquity and broadly cultured. Ever since my arrival in Hangzhou during the *bingwu* year [1366], I lived with his family as teacher-in-residence. From morning to evening, he and I would discuss our Confucian lessons, staying up sometimes till midnight sipping tea and composing poems, and we went on like this for some years. In autumn of the *jiwei* year (1379), I was commanded to serve in government, and we were apart for three changes of winter and summer. This spring was my first chance to come home to attend the graves [of my ancestors], and I’ve had a few weeks to spend some leisure time once more with Yanhui. I am disconsolate that it’s almost time to buy a boat and go north again, but this coming spring if I follow my plans to come back, I shall cer-





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Zhou Fang, poem and postscript,  
1381, attached to Wang Meng's  
*Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*,  
fig. 1.

tainly bring some wine to [his place among] the clouds and woods and fulfill a long-cherished desire, so long as the mountain spirits do not prevent me. Eighteenth day in the sixth lunar month, summer of the *xinyou* year in the Hongwu reign period [July 10, 1381], respectfully inscribed by Zhou Fang of Danqi. (fig. 10)

This postscript by Zhou Fang is quite important for it helps us to date more closely the time when Cui Sheng moved from Hangzhou to live on Bian Mountain, and therefore when Wang Meng painted *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods* for him. As recounted above, after Zhou Fang arrived in Hangzhou in 1366, he lodged for “some years” with the Cui family, which I take to mean three or four years, or sometime around 1370. In turn, this means that Cui Sheng was living in Hangzhou until at least that time.

Of all the twenty-eight colophons on the scroll, the earliest one with a date is the “Rhapsody for the Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods” by Wang Yu, who wrote it in the eleventh year of the Hongwu reign period (1378). As the “Rhapsody” specifically mentions both the “Lyrics of Clouds and Woods” by Wang Meng, and the “Account of the Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods” by Xu Yikui, both these texts must have been written for the painting prior to that time, and in turn the painting must predate them all. Judging from this, we may conclude for now that Cui Sheng moved from Hangzhou to Bian Mountain in Wuxing sometime between 1370 at the earliest and 1378 at the latest.

In his “Account,” Xu Yikui provided a detailed record of why Cui Sheng moved from Hangzhou to dwell on Bian Mountain in Wuxing and how he came to call himself “The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods,” as follows:

The Cui family of Qiantang was [comprised of] local residents, who had dwelt for generations within the market walls, where horses and people crowded and jammed axle-to axle, the din of their voices resounding like thunder throughout the day, and the clouds of their breath rising like mist. But when it came to Master Yanhui [Cui Sheng], he had thoughts that

雲林小隱記  
錢唐崔氏世居閑閣中間闢以棲人馬雅谷竟  
日聲囂若雷氣滿如霧至其隱處之外家蓋吳興  
趙恒欲深隱其間而未得其勝一日步自弁山之  
麓大木森立枝柯相繆時新霽雲未盡歛  
桂木上穿雲氣如紋繡騰起而與雲會遂具  
陰木作屋三楹堂場滿以次其架耶遂生  
居焉治舍種稻藝園種蔬池種魚以自給暇  
則取古人書閱三數行又嘗指或取斯水篆  
法作篆書已復山中野趣遙平穹林之下  
仰觀乎雲未也無心去也無迹然谷與  
忘形交者遂自稱曰雲林小隱其意以謂大隱  
在市朝吾以非字姑慶其小者耳其地去錢唐  
僅踰三舍吾以非字姑慶其小者耳其地去錢唐  
輒往一日其友思之欲與相見胎書招之不答  
也其友曰崔君長往耶復為辭招之不答曰  
雲林贊蕭森有膚畫往耶復為辭招之不答曰  
蓋謂上焉者負世之具自視甚高而與世袖  
鑿寧辭名位而不屑就次焉者賢弱氣冲內審  
其於欲仕無階漁名獵譽以徹利使人常當其  
至於欲仕無階漁名獵譽以徹利使人常當其  
謂處士純盜聲唐人所謂終南捷徑少室高  
價者斯為下矣余雅知產暉彼下焉者固其所  
作而不道焉者亦其所謂次焉者歟然則其  
暉之所以自處其始吾之所讓而不居者則其  
以世俗多嗜利而產暉獨有高世之志可尚  
也請即其小隱為之著記為者于篇焉其友  
世多隱德而文敏公益類則其外曾大父云始  
豐徐一變記

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Xu Yikui (1318–ca. 1400), “Account of The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods,” undated, colophon attached to Wang Meng’s *Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, fig. 1.

reached far beyond the common dust and could not abide to be there, so he made plans to leave and go to another place. As Yanhui’s maternal relations were the Zhao family of Wuxing, he visited back and forth at [their home on] Zha [Creek], and whenever he saw the mountains of the area poking up through the azure clouds and gleaming in the sunlight, he always wished could live in deep seclusion among them, but never succeeded [in finding the right place]. One day he was walking in the foothills of Bian Mountain, when he came upon a level place some four or five *li* wide between the gullies and valleys. In front he saw a great ravine, where large trees stood abreast, of fir and oak, pine and cassia, their boughs and branches interlaced. As the rain had newly cleared and nighttime clouds had not yet formed, the tips of the trees thrust upward into nebulous vapors and, leaping and soaring like young dragons, merged with the clouds, plunging the daytime ravine into shadow. Yanhui dawdled and delayed and couldn’t leave, and sighed, “Isn’t this a good enough place for me to live?” Whereupon he gathered timber and materials and made a hut some three or four bays wide [and moved in with his wife and children]. . . . Wearing a mountain bandana and rustic clothes, he went wandering below the lofty woods. Looking up, he watched the clouds arriving without intent and departing without trace, and drifting away, it seemed as if they were old friends despite their difference in form. Thereafter he styled himself “The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods.”<sup>17</sup> (fig. 11)

Keeping in mind how Cui Sheng chose to settle on Bian Mountain and came to call himself “The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods,” let us turn our attention now to Zhao Yi’s postscript following the transcription of his father’s “Account of *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*”:

Long ago, my late father Duke Wenmin [Zhao Mengfu] painted *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, and also composed an “Account of *The Clear and Distant*.” The former duke was already long departed when my niece’s husband, Cui Fu, got to see the original painting in Wulin [Hangzhou] and made a copy of it. . . . After Fu’s death, his son Cui Sheng mounted it as a scroll, and I inscribed the text of my late father’s “Account of *The Clear*

先人父敏公昔曾作吳興清遠圖亦曾作清遠圖記  
先公世已遠而煙消崔渡之於武林得見真本而臨  
之彷彿之間甚得真趣極可愛也復之既殲其子  
崔歲裝裱成軸余為書  
先人所述清遠圖記於其後觀之愈增悵情已而  
又喜崔歲能守其家傳之妙真所謂好事者  
也時洪武八年歲乙卯三月六日西齋翁識

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12  
Zhao Yi, colophon, 1375, attached to  
Cui Fu's *Copy of Zhao Mengfu's Clear  
and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*,  
fig. 5.

13  
Wang Shizhen (1526–1590) and Dong  
Qichang (1555–1636), colophon,  
undated, attached to Wang Meng's  
*Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*,  
fig. 1.

此卷余曾見於本元人筆於  
殊亦不為陽而為今見此卷色  
為明筆之畫也 也 芳名

黃冠山樵王明為錢塘崔彥暉作雲  
林小隱圖時明所長在重巖複嶂楓丹  
翠黃宏麗之致予而此圖則清遠  
幽鬱大有北苑長陽妙致驟見之以  
為大痴老人及他老人不辨是也圖  
後意似小畫畫之五百教云猶及見  
全不蓋少看范瑤為裝師裁去耳  
題署者僧明季潭村明苑手書  
撰雲林處而同時為翁賦記叙詩  
款者凡廿七人多佳士而余亦知僅山  
陰王松全華蘇伯衡始瑤徐一變  
嘉興鮑均桐廬俞和臨安錢宰會  
稽唐愚士而已沈道積戲謂余惜不  
及文待詔生當一為致以報蓋待詔  
最得詳勝圖 先朝士大夫始末  
也歸而為之以志余懷

吳郡王世貞

13

and Distant” for him at the end.... Happily, Cui Sheng has been able to pre-  
serve this marvelous family heirloom, for which he truly may be called a  
“do-gooder.” Sixth day in the third lunar month of *yiyong*, eighth year in the  
Hongwu reign period [April 7, 1375], inscribed by Xizhai weng [Zhao Yi].<sup>18</sup>  
(fig. 12)

In this colophon written in 1375, while Zhao Yi teased Cui Sheng as a “do-gooder”  
for mounting his father’s painting and asking him to transcribe Zhao Mengfu’s text  
for it, he made entirely no mention of the younger man’s having moved to Bian  
Mountain or calling himself “The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods.” From  
this, we may gather that Cui Sheng was still living in Hangzhou at the time, an esti-  
mation that in turn allows us to narrow the time of Cui Sheng’s departure for Bian  
Mountain — and therefore the date when Wang Meng painted *The Humble Her-  
mit of Clouds and Woods* — until sometime after April 1375, when Zhao Yi wrote his  
postscript on *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*, and before 1378, when  
Wang Yu inscribed his colophon on *The Humble Hermit*. In other words, sometime  
during the three to four years of 1375–78, Cui Sheng permanently abandoned the  
hustle and bustle of life in Hangzhou, and moved to Bian Mountain overlooking  
Lake Tai, where he lived in reclusion from society as the Humble Hermit of Clouds  
and Woods. And from here, he could gaze afar to the Dongting islands and enjoy for  
himself the best view of the “clear and distant landscape of Wuxing” that his mater-  
nal great-grandfather Zhao Mengfu had painted and extolled.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, let us turn to the three Ming dynasty colophons on *The Hum-  
ble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, and briefly consider some of the ramifications of  
their contents. In his colophon, Wang Shizhen said of Wang Meng’s painting that  
“in this picture, the clear distances and dense mists have the marvelous quality of  
[a work by] Beiyuan (Dong Yuan, died 962) and Xiangyang [Mi Fu, 1051–1107],”  
while Dong Qichang wrote: “I have seen a copy of this work, also painted by a Yuan  
dynasty artist, and attributed its deficiencies to Shuming [Wang Meng]. Now that I  
see the genuine work, I feel [as awestruck] as General Pei Min when he encountered  
a real tiger.”<sup>20</sup> (fig. 13). While neither of the colophons by Wang Shizhen and Dong  
Qichang bears a date, the third colophon was written by Zhang Jinchen on “mid-  
autumn day in the eighth lunar month of the forty-sixth year in the Wanli reign



此卷乃王元美故物也移心嚮往久矣後為董玄宰所得余  
以七十金購之時萬曆四十六年八月中秋日張觀宸識



青弁圖依北苑  
丁巳夏五晦  
張惟其世文  
張惟其  
積漢才為五  
吾端雅大見  
秋光何處  
溪石亭中  
吳昌碩

14

15

14

Zhang Jinchen (late 16th–early 17th c.), colophon, 1618, attached to Wang Meng's *Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, fig. 1.

15

Dong Qichang, *Qingbian Mountain*, in the style of Dong Yuan, 1617, hanging scroll, 224.5 x 67.2 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.

period [October 3, 1618],” and informs us that: “This scroll was formerly owned by Wang Yuanmei [Wang Shizhen], and my heart was indeed long captivated by it! Later it was acquired by Dong Xuanzai [Dong Qichang], and I purchased it [from him] for seventy [taels of] gold.” (fig. 14) Zhang Jinchen’s inscription thus suggests that just prior to his writing in 1618, the scroll had been in the hands of Dong Qichang.

This brings to mind Dong Qichang’s large hanging scroll titled, *Qingbian Mountain*, in the Style of Dong Yuan, painted on “last day of the fifth lunar month, summer in the *dingsi* year [July 2, 1617],” (fig. 15) now in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.<sup>21</sup> Because of the painting’s subject matter and format as a

hanging scroll, it would seem quite natural to compare it to Wang Meng's *Dwelling in Seclusion on Qingbian Mountain*, as some have done;<sup>22</sup> however, based on Dong Qichang's superscription for *Dwelling in Seclusion*, which is dated "mid-autumn of the *gengshen* year [September 11, 1620]," he evidently had not seen Wang's hanging scroll prior to creating his own rendition of the mountain three years earlier.<sup>23</sup> But while Wang Meng's famous hanging scroll may not have had any influence on Dong Qichang's version of the mountain, from the discussion above we now know that a different work by Wang on the same subject, his handscroll painting, *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods*, was probably in Dong's hands around the time that he painted *Qingbian Mountain, in the Style of Dong Yuan*, and may well have had some effect on him. Indeed, the artistic vision that Dong was trying to capture in his *Qingbian Mountain* was quite possibly inspired by the verbal picture of the place painted by Xu Yikui in passages of his "Account of the Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods," such as: "he saw a great ravine, where large trees stood abreast, of fir and oak, pine and cassia, their boughs and branches interlaced. As the rain had newly cleared and nighttime clouds had not yet formed, the tips of the trees thrust upward into nebulous vapors and, leaping and soaring like young dragons, merged with the clouds, plunging the daytime ravine into shadow." In terms of brushwork, Dong Qichang's painting also exhibits the same stylistic qualities derived from Dong Yuan and Mi Fu that Wang Shizhen ascribed to *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods* in his colophon on that scroll.

In short, the possibility that Wang Meng's *Humble Hermit* influenced Dong Qichang's *Qingbian Mountain, in the Style of Dong Yuan* is well worth serious consideration. Thus, the story that runs from *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing* through *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods* not only restores the lost history of a multigenerational relationship between the Zhao family of Wuxing and the Cui family of Hangzhou during the fourteenth century but also reveals some previously unknown facts about the transmission of artistic ideas—particularly those of Dong Yuan and Mi Fu—over the three-hundred-year-period from Zhao Mengfu to Cui Fu and then from Wang Meng to Dong Qichang.

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## NOTES

This essay is revised from the author's conference presentation, originally titled: "The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods: A Family Fascination with the Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing."

- 1 The author would like to thank Stephen D. Allee, research specialist at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, for his translation of this essay into English. The original Chinese text will be included in a forthcoming collection of the author's essays and articles to be published by the Palace Museum, Beijing, as a volume in the series *Mingjia jingdian: Zhongguo shuhua jianding yu yanjiu* 名家經典：中國書畫鑒定與研究.
- 2 The text of Qianlong's poem is also preserved in the second installment of his collected poetry. While the poem is undated on the painting, judging from its location in this chronologically arranged collection, the emperor composed the poem in mid- to late August 1748, and presumably inscribed it on the painting around the same time. See: Qianlong 乾隆, *Yuzhishi erji* 御製詩二集, 5:21a, in *Wenyuange Siku quanshu dianziban* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (CD-rom version of the *Siku quanshu*) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press and Digital Heritage Publishers, 1992), disc 143 (hereafter cited as WSKQS).
- 3 See Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 (1834–1894), *Ranghiguan guoyan xulu* 穰梨館過眼續錄, published together with *Ranghiguan guoyan lu* 穰梨館過眼錄 (Wuxing: Yigutang, 1891), 3:13a–29a.
- 4 See Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖, comp., Tanaka Kenrō 田中乾郎, ed., *Chūgoku meiga shū* 中國名畫集 (Tokyo: Ryubundo, 1935), vol. 2, no pagination, plates 11–12 (painting, artist's accompanying poem, and two other attached texts); and Xie Zhiliu 謝稚柳, *Tang Wudai Song Yuan mingji* 唐五代宋元名迹 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), plates 105–06 (painting only).
- 5 In his inscription, Wang Meng wrote the second character of Yanhui's name as *hui* 輝, instead of *hui* 暉, by which he is known in most sources. The two characters are homonyms and share a common meaning of "bright," or "radiant."
- 6 For biographical sources on Cui Fu 崔復 (1318–1355) and his son Cui Sheng 崔晟 (*zi* Yanhui 彥暉), see Wang Deyi 王德毅 et al., comps., *Yuanren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 元人傳記資料索引, 5 vols. (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1980), vol. 2, 1033 and 1034.
- 7 See Shan Guolin 單國霖, "Zhao Mengfu *Wuxing qingyuan tu shangxi*" 趙孟頫《吳興清遠圖》賞析 (An analysis of Zhao Mengfu's *The Clear and Distant Landscape of Wuxing*), in *Shanghai bowuguan cangbao lu bianji weiyuanhui* 上海博物館藏寶錄編輯委員會, eds. *Shanghai bowuguan cangbao lu* 上海博物館藏寶錄 (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian and Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 165–66; and *Zhao Mengfu huaji* 趙孟頫畫集 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1995), 52 and 98–100.
- 8 While Zhang Yu's colophon is undated, it is immediately preceded by the colophon of Wang Lian 王廉, written in the fifth lunar month of the *xinyou* year (May 24–June 22, 1381), and immediately followed by the colophon of Dong Cun 董存, written on the fifth day in the tenth lunar month (October 22, 1381). It is fairly certain therefore that Zhang Yu's colophon was written sometime between those two dates.
- 9 This later comment appears on an undated letter from Zhao Mengfu to Cui Jinzhi known either as *Zhaliang tie* 乍涼帖 (Suddenly cold letter) or *Yu Jinzhi zuxia* 與進之足下 (To Mister [Cui] Jinzhi), which is included in the album,



*Zhao Mengfu chidu liutie* 趙孟頫尺牘六帖 (Six letters by Zhao Mengfu). See Wang Zhengsong 王政松, ed., *Qinggong zhenmi biechang tulu* 清宮珍秘別藏圖錄 (Taipei: Juanqinzhai yishu youxian gongsi, 1999), 32–33.

10 Wang Chengzhi's collector seals appear on the Zhao Mengfu and Guan Daosheng paintings, and the great contemporary connoisseur Ke Jiusi 柯九思 (1290–1343) added a colophon stating that he had viewed the scroll in Wang Chengzhi's collection.

11 This 1316 handscroll by Zhao Mengfu, which contains a portrait of Laozi 老子 and a transcription in small standard script of the *Daodejing* 道德經 (*The Way and its Power*), is in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. See Wang Lianqi 王連起, ed., *Yuandai shufa* 元代書法, in series *Gugong bowuyuan cang wenwu zhenpin daxi* 故宮博物院藏文物珍品大系 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2001), 110–15.

12 This letter is in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. See He Chuanxing 何傳馨, “Zhao Mengfu de ceying — Yuancang Qizha ce guan hou” 趙孟頫的側影 — 院藏〈七札〉冊觀後, in *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊 264 (March 2005): 23–26.

13 See “Cui mu Zhao furen muzhiming” 崔母趙夫人墓誌銘 (Epitaph for Mother Cui, Lady Zhao [Shudian]), in Xu Yikui 徐一夔 (1318–ca. 1400), *Shifeng gao* 始豐稿, 6:28b–30b, in WSKQS.

14 At present, Zhao Yi's descriptive account (*ji* 記) is mounted behind all the colophons by his contemporaries; however, as the other colophons date to 1375 and Zhao Yi wrote this work between 1355 and 1360, the current location of the text is probably an error introduced during some later remounting of the scroll.

15 For discussions and images of this painting, see Richard Ellis Vinograd,

“Wang Meng's *Pien Mountains*: The Landscape of Eremitism in later Fourteenth Century Chinese Painting,” (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 252–64; and Zhong Yinlan 鍾銀蘭, “Bianfeng qianli shi e'e: Wang Meng *Qingbian yinju tu*” 弁峰千里勢峨峨: 王蒙《青卞隱居圖》, in *Shanghai bowuguan cangbao hu*, 166–67.

16 For these two poems by Zhao Mengfu, see Ren Daobin 任道斌, ed., *Zhao Mengfu ji* 趙孟頫集 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1986), 13 and 60.

17 For the full text of this colophon, see “Yunlin xiaoyin ji” 雲林小隱記 (Account of the humble hermit of clouds and woods), in Xu Yikui, *Shifeng gao*, 5, no. 6–8, in WSKQS.

18 While Zhao Yi's postscript, dated 1375, appears on the same sheet of paper as his transcription of Zhao Mengfu's “Account of *The Clear and Distant*,” it was not written at the same time. As discussed above in regard to Zhang Yu's 1360 colophon, we know that Zhao Yi must have transcribed his father's text some fifteen to twenty years earlier, between 1355 and 1360. And looking carefully at the calligraphy and seals of the transcription and the postscript, one notes that the size of characters differs between the two, as does the style of writing, the respective signatures are not the same, and moreover the color of the seal paste differs in the impressions that follow each. Taking all of this into account, it is clear that the transcription and postscript, while appearing in close proximity on the same paper, were written at different times.

19 For the source of the quotations cited here, see note 17.

20 General Pei Min lived during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Tang dynasty (r. 827–41). When Pei Min, proud of his prowess in having killed thirty-one tigers

in a single day, was told that they were all just cubs, he went rushing off to find a full-grown specimen to shoot. But when he saw the real thing and heard its ear-splitting roar, Pei Min dropped his bow and arrow and was frozen with fear, and never mentioned hunting tigers again.

21 See Wai-kam Ho, Laurence Sickman et al., *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, with Indiana University Press, 1980), 246–47.

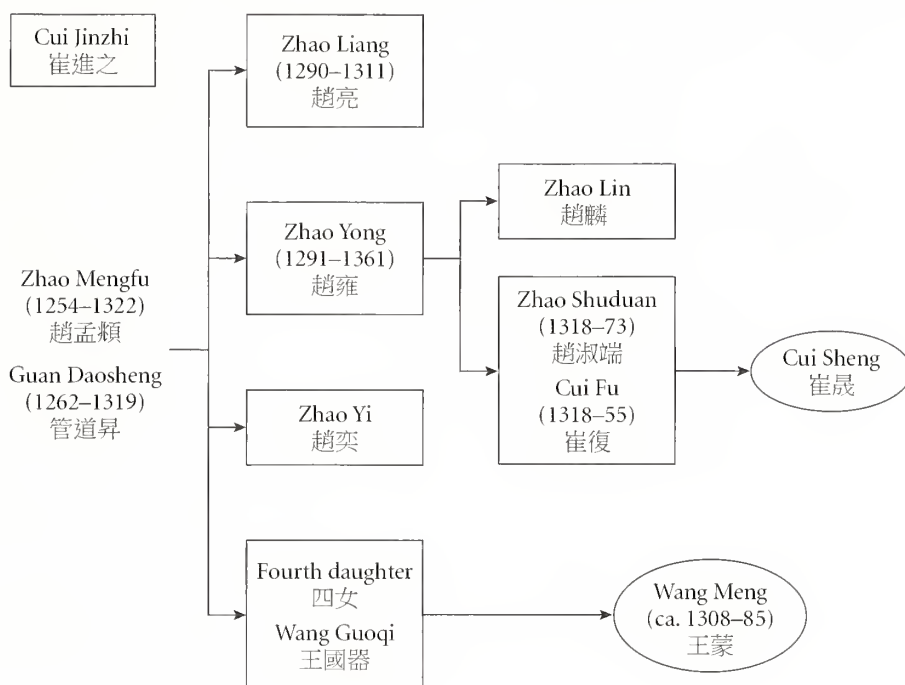
22 See James Cahill, *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 39–43.

23 See Dong Qichang's superscription to Wang Meng's *Dwelling in Seclusion on Qingbian Mountain*, published in *Shanghai bowuguan cangbao hu*, 53. Also, in his catalogue of painting and calligraphy, the collector Wu Sheng 吳升 (died ca. 1713) recorded an album by Dong Qichang called *After Huichong*. In the first opening of the album, the artist wrote: “Secretary Huang Binwang just brought a handscroll by Huichong (965–1017) to exchange for my *Picture of Qingbian*, by the Woodcutter of Yellow Crane Mountain [Wang Meng].” And in the album's eighth opening, he wrote: “Secretary Huang from Xin'an showed me his *Springtime River* by Huichong, and I also brought my *Picture of Qingbian*, which is the Woodcutter's [Wang Meng's] most exceptional work. Staring at them with wonder in the middle of the hall and exclaiming our delight, we exchanged them for viewing.” It is not known if Wang Meng's hanging scroll *Dwelling in Seclusion on Qingbian Mountain* is the same work as the painting named here as

## APPENDIX

*Picture of Qingbian*, nor can we know the authenticity of the lost album that contains these remarks; however, nowhere in his superscription on *Dwelling in Seclusion* — which he wrote for a friend — did Dong Qichang indicate that he ever personally owned the hanging scroll. See Wu Sheng, comp., *Daguan lu* 大觀錄 (preface 1712) (Wujin: Shengyilou, 1920), 19: 28a–29a; and Zheng Wei 鄭威, *Dong Qichang nianpu* 董其昌年譜 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1989, 93–94, under the year Wanli 41 (1613).

Four Generations of the Cui Family of Hangzhou and the Zhao Family of Wuxing.







## FIT FOR MONKS' QUARTERS

*Monasteries as Centers of Aesthetic Activity in the Later Fourteenth Century*

### Abstract

In the later fourteenth century Buddhist monasteries remained centers of art production and consumption as they had been in the Song and earlier periods, and highly educated monks continued to share aesthetic interests with the secular elite. Yet we encounter few monks or monasteries in modern accounts of painting and calligraphy of the late Yuan and Ming dynasties. The tendency to look away from religious society at this juncture is largely explained by two powerful art-historical narratives that intersect in the Yuan period: the Japanese account of the trajectory of “Chan art” and the Chinese formulation of a literati painting canon that hinges on certain Yuan-dynasty painters of the scholar-official class. Nevertheless, monks’ writings preserved in literary collections, in art catalogues, and on extant scrolls provide abundant information about the collection and appreciation of art in monasteries in the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties. After a brief review of the historiography and historical circumstances that have obscured our view of monks and monasteries in the aesthetic life of the Yuan-Ming transition period, this essay presents a number of episodes that illustrate the artistic practices of such eminent clerics as Zongle and Daoyan and their relationships with scholars and artists among the laity, most notably Song Lian and Wang Meng. These accounts shed light on aesthetic environments cultivated in monasteries and on ways in which monasteries were comparable to scholars’ studios as venues for artistic exchange.

IN *TUHUI BAOJIAN* 圖繪寶鑒 (Precious mirror of painting), the canonical collection of artists’ biographies compiled by Xia Wenyan 夏文彥 in the middle of the fourteenth century, paintings by the Buddhist monk Muqi Fachang 牧溪法常 (13th c.) are characterized as “coarse and vile, lacking in ancient method, truly not for refined (or elegant) diversion (*yawan* 雅玩),” and the works of the monk Puming Xuechuang 普明雪窗 (act. ca. 1340–1350) are deemed “only fit for display in monks’ quarters, not sufficient for pure diversion (*qingwan* 清玩) in a scholar’s study.”<sup>1</sup> These dismissive comments have been used to characterize key values and junctures in Chinese and Japanese art history, specifically, to distinguish Chinese painter-monks from “Confucian” artists of the scholar-official class and to show the ostensible disdain in which the latter held the art of the former in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368).<sup>2</sup> Such characterizations have proven so influential that not only monk-painters but also monasteries and monastic audiences have been largely dismissed from our studies of Chinese painting of the later Yuan and Ming dynasties (1368–1644), which are dominated by Confucian social perspectives.<sup>3</sup> In the master narrative of Chinese painting, as the gate to the scholars’ studios opens

in the Yuan dynasty, it closes on the monasteries as well on the imperial court. When our chronological accounts of Chinese painting and calligraphy depart the Chan-infused environment of the Southern Song capital to plunge into the Yuan literati revolution, mentions of monasteries grow fewer and fewer until they disappear almost entirely by time we get to the beginning of the Ming. Court painters return with the Ming, but the monks do not reappear in the canonical art histories until the seventeenth century, and even then scant attention is given to the subject of this study, namely, the monasteries as sites for aesthetic pursuits. Meanwhile in Japan, Song and Yuan paintings from Chinese monasteries are recognized as foundational works in the history of Zen painting, but here too the Chinese story largely ends with the Yuan.

This essay takes up the story of collectible paintings (as opposed to ritual scrolls and murals) in China's monasteries at the point where most art histories leave it—in the later fourteenth century—and focuses on the reception and circulation of works of art by elite monks. After a brief critical review of the treatment of monk-painters in certain influential Yuan-period painting texts, the selective use of these texts by modern art historians, and other historical circumstances that have led to the marginalization of the monasteries in our accounts of Yuan and Ming painting, my focus shifts to colophons on paintings, records in painting catalogues, and selections from literary collections that allow us to see paintings through the eyes of influential monks who moved among the great southeastern monasteries of Hangzhou, Ningbo, Suzhou, and Nanjing during the Yuan-Ming transition period. Episodes of clerical engagement with painting and calligraphy demonstrate the critical role that monasteries still played as art centers in the early Ming, when literati from within and beyond the monastery gate continued to find common ground in the arts.

### Closing the Monastery Gate

In the story of the Chinese failure to appreciate the genius of Muqi and his kind, Xia Wenyan has proven a durable villain. His *Tuhui baojian* (preface dated to 1365) betrays a bias that has been generically described as “literati,”<sup>4</sup> and it is evident in his entry for Muqi:

Monk Fachang, whose sobriquet (*hao*) was Muqi, took pleasure in painting dragons and tigers, monkeys and cranes, reeds and wild geese, landscape, trees and rocks, and figures. All were casually brushed, dotted with ink, and then complete. He expressed ideas in an abbreviated manner, without adornment. However, [his work] is coarse and vile, lacking in ancient method, truly not for refined (or elegant) diversion.<sup>5</sup>

None of this is original to Xia Wenyan. The sharpest barb echoes Tang Hou's 湯屋 *Gujin huajian* 古今畫鑒 (Criticism of past and present painting) (ca. 1329), which reads: "In recent times, Muqi, the monk Fachang, frequently engaged in ink play. [It is] coarse and vile, lacking in ancient method."<sup>6</sup> Xia Wenyan's final zinger, "truly not for refined diversion," appears in the entry for Muqi in Zhuang Su's 莊肅 *Huaji buyi* 畫繼補遺 (Supplement to *Huaji* [Painting continued]) (ca. 1298). Zhuang Su wrote:

Monk Fachang called himself Muqi. [He] was good at making paintings of dragons and tigers, figures, reeds and geese, and various other subjects, [as well as] dried up and bland mountains and plains. [These paintings are] truly not for refined (or elegant) diversion, [but] only for a monk's room or Daoist's hut to enhance the air of quiet seclusion.<sup>7</sup>

Very similar to Xia Wenyan's critique of Xuechuang, the last lines may represent a cliché for disparaging monk-painters. Derogatory intent aside, the juxtaposition of worldly and unworldly arenas for visual display, elegant secular society versus the secluded environment of the religious retreat, attests that paintings of secular subjects were used to aesthetic ends in the monks' quarters.

Xia Wenyan seems to have drawn the first few lines of his brief entry on Muqi from the more extensive treatment of the artist's life and work in *Songzhai meipu* 松齋梅譜 (Pine-studio plum manual) (ca. 1351) by Wu Taisu 吳太素.<sup>8</sup> Xia Wenyan could have constructed quite a different characterization of Muqi had he chosen more positive lines from Wu Taisu's account of the artist. Wu Taisu praises, for instance, the "lofty character" of Muqi's paintings of egrets and lotus, reeds and wild geese, and singles out his "Three Friends" scroll(s) as works of peerless quality. Moreover, far from suggesting that Muqi and his works were rejected and reviled, Wu Taisu reports that the monk's portrait could still be seen in a major Hangzhou monastery, that his paintings of "reeds and wild geese" inspired numerous forgeries, and that "families of the Jiangnan scholars" preserved his works.<sup>9</sup> Apparently the scholarly families in question did not share Xia Wenyan's literati values, at least as they applied to Muqi.

Xia Wenyan's entries for Muqi and Xuechuang are conspicuously disparaging. He cites other Song and Yuan monks more positively, or at least neutrally, and often identifies their models in painting. His note for the Song monk Jingbin 靜賓, a painter of extraordinary pines and strange rocks, includes the observation that monasteries received many of his works, thus drawing attention to collection of paintings of various subjects by the monasteries.<sup>10</sup> But such weak and implied approval pales in comparison to his more vehement criticisms. His pithy pastiche



about Muqi stands out not only for its harshness, but also for the long shadow it has cast over the estimation of Chinese Buddhist monks and monasteries in later Chinese art history.

Pejorative comments by Xia Wenyan and others have been used to support the problematic notion that works by such Song and Yuan monks were rejected in China and only found a true audience in Japan, where they were preserved and appreciated and the “Chan” (Japanese Zen) tradition realized its full promise as Zen art. A representative statement of this position appears in the catalogue of the influential 1970 exhibition *Zen Painting and Calligraphy*, which, not coincidentally, was composed of Chinese and Japanese works from Japanese collections:

The [Chinese] artists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did not establish a Ch’an tradition. The great collectors of the Ming period did not collect the works of these obscure Ch’an painters, who, if mentioned at all in biographical reference works, were given no words of praise. That any part of the Ch’an oeuvre has been preserved at all and handed down to the present day is due only to the activities of a small group of dedicated Japanese monks who penetrated into the coterie of Ch’an artists. With a genuine desire to attain Enlightenment, they had come from across the sea to sit at the feet of the great Ch’an masters. Deeply imbued with the philosophy of Ch’an, they were perhaps in a better position to appreciate Ch’an art than their Chinese secular contemporaries. Their acquisitive instinct, their desire to transplant the real Ch’an to Japan, saved the oeuvre of some of China’s most fascinating artists.<sup>11</sup>

This line of argument echoes Japanese accounts of Chan/Zen Buddhist history that have been embraced uncritically in the West until recently and can be similarly critiqued.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the art-historical narrative cited above can be challenged on nearly every point, from the notion of the existence of a discrete “Chan oeuvre” in China to the assertion that Chinese painter-monks worked in obscurity and received no praise on their native soil. This is, of course, well-traveled art-historical terrain, and more balanced views of the Chinese reception of Muqi’s art and his place in Chinese art history are readily available in both pre-modern Chinese writing and modern scholarship.<sup>13</sup> There is no need to rehearse them here, especially since one objective of this essay is to move the spotlight off Muqi and other monk-painters who entered the modern canon primarily because their works survive in Japanese collections. The focus on Song and Yuan “Zen” paintings in Japanese collections is like a magician’s sleight of hand, which deflects attention from the underlying operation of the trick. The problem is not so

much that we see Muqi, Xuechuang, and related painters through a Japanese lens, but that this lens obscures other realities.

Japanese constructions of Zen art history and Chinese Confucian literati bias are not the only culprits in the disappearance of Yuan and Ming monasteries from the art-historical stage. Another major cause is the nearly complete loss of Chinese monastery art collections and records of their content. Events denied Chinese Buddhist monasteries the degree of historical continuity enjoyed by their counterparts in Japan. Our view of later Chinese art in general would be much broader if the art collections of China's great religious institutions had survived the turmoil of regime changes, particularly the Yuan-Ming transition, and the twentieth-century Cultural Revolution. The loss of these collections makes it difficult to challenge the assertion that works by Muqi, Xuechuang, and other Song and Yuan monks (as well as many secular painters) were valued only in Japan, where, not coincidentally, they were often preserved in monasteries.

Collections in Japanese monasteries such as Daitokuji suggest the artistic riches once seen in and circulated among the great monasteries of the China.<sup>14</sup> The core of the painting collection of the Obaku Manpukuji in Uji, Japan, came with the monastery's Chinese founders from their home temple, Wanfu Monastery, in Fujian province.<sup>15</sup> More artworks may remain in Chinese monasteries than we know. Examples of Ming and Qing painting and calligraphy are gradually coming to light in monastery treasure halls, although seldom accompanied by much information on their recent provenance. A few monasteries, such as Chongshan Monastery 崇善寺 in Taiyuan, retain significant scrolls and albums handed down from the Ming and Qing periods. Most of the monasteries that survived into the twentieth century, however, were demolished, closed, or recycled to secular ends after 1949. Monasteries that have reopened or been converted into museums usually house not only their own remaining treasures, but also objects salvaged from demolished or recycled temples.<sup>16</sup> Thus, China has no counterpart to Daitokuji or the other Japanese monasteries that have been fortunate enough to maintain significant art collections and inventories representing centuries of cultural continuity and affording access to a variety of aesthetic environments and visual cultures.

Because so much has been lost from monasteries in China, we must depend largely on inscriptions on paintings and other textual sources for insights into monastery collections and the practices of monk-collectors and connoisseurs. Some of this terrain has been explored. In his pioneering book *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*, Timothy Brook discusses aesthetic pursuits in monasteries and monastery collections in connection with "the role of Buddhist institutions in gentry society."<sup>17</sup> Hui-shu Lee has pointed out that an inscription, by an abbot of Jingci Monastery 淨慈寺 in Hangzhou written

in 1208 on a painting of the White-robed Guanyin, “reflects the fact that these temples were very much engaged in the production of art and possessed their own considerable collections.”<sup>18</sup> Uta Lauer, in her article in this issue, “Changing Media: The Transmission of Images in Yuan Painting”, emphasizes the roles played by Buddhist temple scriptoria and painting workshops in the transmission of images and also touches on the destruction of the monasteries. Her earlier study of the calligraphy of the famous early Yuan monk Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1262–1323) relates episodes of scholarly and artistic exchange between this master and leading secular literati that provide an immediate background, and quite possibly models, for some of the late Yuan and early Ming clerical aesthetic pursuits and exchanges discussed in this article.<sup>19</sup>

### Reopening the Monastery Gate

In other essays I have argued that the great monasteries of the Ming and Qing periods were comparable to the imperial courts and to the scholars’ studios as sites for engagement with the visual arts. They differed largely in their relative accessibility, the monasteries being by far the most open. As repositories of art offering controlled aesthetic experiences to diverse segments of the public, monasteries can be broadly compared to modern museums.<sup>20</sup> Here I continue this discussion of monasteries as centers of aesthetic activity, particularly the collection and appreciation of painting, but situate it in the Yuan–Ming transition period, during the last years of the Yuan and the reign of the first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, the Hongwu 洪武 emperor (r. 1368–1398). This choice of period may seem odd, given the widespread destruction of monasteries and disruption of monastic life at the time. Many gazetteer entries for individual monasteries include terse indications that they were destroyed in the fires of war at end of the Yuan dynasty. According to one later source, only 20 to 30 percent of monasteries survived in areas overrun by warring armies.<sup>21</sup>

Early Ming, however, saw extensive rebuilding of monasteries. Moreover, biographies rather than buildings are keys to recovering aesthetic engagements of prominent clerics like the men introduced here, notably, Chushi Fanqi 楚石梵琦 (1296–1370), Jitan Zongle 季潭宗泐 (1318–1391), Jianxin Laifu 見心來復 (1319–1391), Sidao Daoyan 斯道道衍 (also known as Yao Guangxiao 姚廣孝, 1335–1418), and Nanzhou Puxia 南洲溥洽 (1348–1426). These monks, and others like them, were at the same time literati, and moved easily between their monastic worlds and secular society, just as prominent scholar-officials and members of the imperial family sought their company. Regime change certainly affected their lives dramatically, as will be apparent in some of the biographical snapshots provided below, but this will only be mentioned in passing. Our subject is the involvement of eminent



monks with notable works of art and artists as representative of a type of monastic culture sustained across the dynastic divide.<sup>22</sup>

These scholarly monks enjoyed the arts in the same manner as their secular colleagues, albeit with a few distinctly Buddhist twists. Thus their writings have much to tell us about art at this time in general. This is an added boon, since the Hongwu reign is usually regarded as a fairly bleak period in the history of Chinese painting, with Wang Meng's 王蒙 (ca. 1308–1385) implication in the Hu Weiyong 胡惟庸 treason case and tragic end in prison in 1385 representing the perils of service in the politically volatile environment of the new Ming court.<sup>23</sup> Monks were certainly not immune to these perils; sixty-four were implicated in the Hu Weiyong affair.<sup>24</sup> In the same decade, probably not coincidentally, the emperor launched an active suppression of Buddhism. In the very opening years of the Ming, however, the emperor's view of the religion was much more benevolent, to the lasting benefit of the monasteries, many of which were rebuilt with imperial patronage and awarded tax-free land for support at that time.<sup>25</sup> Eminent monks such as the men named above were summoned to Nanjing for imperial audiences, and many continued to move in court circles and serve near the throne. In this environment art and artistic exchange flourished within monastery walls as it had for centuries. Monks continued to acquire paintings, to seek prestigious inscriptions for them, and to bequeath them to disciples. Records of these transactions document eminent monks' art-based social interaction with each other and with such prominent figures in secular society as the early Ming official Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381) and the painter Wang Meng.

Monks wrote colophons for paintings of Buddhist subjects and for copies of sutras, as we would expect, but they by no means limited their literary responses to religious art. They composed inscriptions for paintings of many types, secular and religious, ancient and contemporary, by monks and by lay painters. They wrote at the request of other clerics and of secular friends on paintings and calligraphies kept in monasteries and private family collections. The discussion to follow integrates selected examples of such colophons with brief biographical sketches of their authors.

Most familiar today are the inscriptions by monks on paintings of religious subjects by contemporary artists, transmitted through monastic channels and preserved in Japan. Inscriptions by the monk and calligrapher Chushi Fanqi are prime examples.<sup>26</sup> Fanqi's acquaintance with famous persons began early. He was just a boy living in a monastery by West Lake in Hangzhou when he met Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322), who became his patron, paying the government fee for the clerical certificate that allowed him to take the tonsure and become a monk.<sup>27</sup> Fanqi was a Linji Chan monk in the lineage of Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163), a

prototypical ecumenical master who “befriended court officials and men of letters and created a social and cultural milieu that encouraged monks to combine Chan disciplines with Confucian scholarship, arts, and letters.”<sup>28</sup> Fanqi’s reputation as a calligrapher reached the Yuan court, and Yuan Emperor Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1320–1323) summoned him to participate in a transcription of the *Tripitaka* in gold.<sup>29</sup> The brief record of his work in Tao Zongyi’s 陶宗儀 *Shushi huiyao* 書史會要 (Essentials of the history of calligraphy) (preface dated to 1376), however, indicates that, as a calligrapher, he was especially admired not for his standard but for his “free running-cursive” 行草 script.<sup>30</sup> We see his inscriptions in the running style of Zhao Mengfu on a well-known series of Chan narrative paintings by Yin Tuoluo 因陀羅 (14th c.) in Japanese collections; like many of the monks’ colophons to be discussed below, these inscriptions address the subjects of the pictures.<sup>31</sup>

Despite his advanced age at the opening of the Ming, Fanqi was one of the clerical luminaries summoned by Zhu Yuanzhang to his new capital, Nanjing, to preach and conduct services for those who lost their lives in establishing his dynasty. After taking part in such services in 1368 and 1369, Fanqi stayed briefly at the great Tianjie Monastery 天界寺 in Nanjing, a primary meeting place for monks and for stars in the scholar-official firmament such as Song Lian, whose literary interaction with monks in the colophon spaces of paintings will also be discussed below.<sup>32</sup>

Another eminent monk of the Yuan-Ming transition period well known in Japan was the celebrated poet Jianxin Laifu, whose sobriquet was Pu’an 蒲菴. Laifu became a monk in his native area of Fengcheng 豐城, today in Jiangxi province, but he spent much of his career in Zhejiang. In 1342 he went to Mount Jing 徑山 to become a disciple of Nanchu Shiyue 南楚師悅 of Wanshou Monastery 萬壽寺. Subsequently, he moved to the great Lingyin Monastery 靈隱寺 in Hangzhou and traveled extensively around the Jiangnan. In 1357, on the recommendation of the Branch Commission for Buddhist and Daoist Affairs, he was made abbot of Dingshui Monastery 定水寺 in Cixi 慈溪, Ningbo prefecture. In the early Ming Laifu became abbot of the Lingyin Monastery. He was called to Nanjing to take part in court-sponsored Buddhist assemblies at the opening of the dynasty and upon the death of Empress Ma in 1382, at which time Zhu Yuanzhang selected eminent monks to serve his sons as religious advisors.<sup>33</sup> Laifu served the Prince of Shu, Zhu Chun 朱椿, and also the Prince of Jin, Zhu Gang 朱綱. Laifu was further appointed Left Buddhist Rectifier (*Zuo Jueyi* 左覺義) of the Central Buddhist Registry (*Senglu si* 僧錄司), the government agency for oversight of the Buddhist clergy nationwide. One of many implicated in the Hu Weiyong treason case, he was arrested, punished, and died in prison at the age of seventy-three *sui*.<sup>34</sup>

From the time he was a young man, Laifu associated with some of the most prominent scholars of the day. *Danyou ji* 澹游集, an anthology Laifu compiled

about 1364 from poems and other compositions written for him by 148 secular as well as monastic contemporaries, includes poems by such luminaries as Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348), Ouyang Xuan 歐陽玄 (1283–1357), and Gu Ying 顧瑛 (1310–1369).<sup>35</sup> Laifu was also known as a skilled calligrapher in the style of Zhao Mengfu.<sup>36</sup> His inscriptions can be seen on his own portrait painted for his Japanese follower Ikō Tokken 以亨得謙 and preserved by Manzaiji Temple in Saga Prefecture in Japan, on an ink painting of Budai in the Goto Museum, and on a painting of Mañjuśrī wearing a braided robe that belongs to the Idemitsu Art Museum in Tokyo. He was at Dingshui Monastery when he inscribed his own portrait in 1365; on the paintings of Budai and the Braided-robe Mañjuśrī he identifies himself as a monk of Lingyin Monastery.<sup>37</sup>

The Braided-robe Mañjuśrī invites a short digression because of the number of notable monks who inscribed paintings of this subject in the fourteenth century. Ahn Hwi-Joon, in a pioneering article on paintings of this iconography, demonstrated the importance of this theme in Chan Buddhist painting and provided a comparative analysis of sixteen examples painted in China and Japan.<sup>38</sup> Several of the Chinese works bear inscriptions by Chinese monks active in the late Yuan–early Ming in the Hangzhou and Ningbo areas of Zhejiang: Zuming 祖銘 of Mount Jing wrote in 1353; Chongyou 崇裕 (Fuzong Fashi 扶宗法師, style name Yuezhi 約之) of Ayuwang Monastery 阿育王寺 in 1376; Xiyan 希顏 of Tiantong Monastery 天童寺 wrote on two scrolls, one dated to 1406.<sup>39</sup> The painting inscribed by Chongyou carries a seal of Xuejian 雪澗, to whom many paintings of the Braided-robe Mañjuśrī are attributed, including the one inscribed by Laifu in the Idemitsu Art Museum. It has been said that Xuejian is recorded only in the Japanese text *Kum-daikan Sayuchoki* 君臺觀左右帳記, and it has even been suggested that he might have been Japanese.<sup>40</sup> Ahn not only recognized Xuejian as Chinese, but also tentatively identified him as a monk of the monastery on Mount Jing.<sup>41</sup> In fact, Xuejian is not wholly unrecorded in Chinese sources. A hanging scroll of Mañjuśrī bearing Xuejian's seal was in the Qing imperial collection in the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> The compilers of the imperial catalogue, however, did not recognize the seal as that of a Yuan artist, and identified the painting as an anonymous Song work of the first quality. The assessment of quality may have been influenced by the eminence of the author of inscription above the image, Laifu's contemporary Zongle, who will be introduced below. Whether or not Xuejian was the monk of Mount Jing identified by Ahn, inscriptions such as those of Zongle (dated to 1378) and Chongyou indicate the popularity of the subject and the likely participation of the artist in elite Buddhist literati circles of the later fourteenth-century.

Laifu's inscriptions were by no means limited to contemporary pictures associated with Chan and preserved in Japan. He wrote for old masterworks, religious



and secular, and for paintings by his secular contemporaries. His colophons are recorded in catalogues of Chinese painting and calligraphy,<sup>43</sup> and many appear in his collected writings, *Pu'an ji* 蒲菴集.<sup>44</sup> Like *Danyou ji* 澹游集, *Pu'an ji* documents his wide social connections as well as the degree to which he was appreciated as poet, calligrapher, and connoisseur of art. Individuals from both sides of the monastery wall sought his poetic inscriptions for paintings in their collections. Occasionally the collection is identified, a notable example being the collection of the Prince of Shu. A number of poems were composed for functional works such as “farewell” paintings. One was written on the occasion of seeing off the painting master Xu Jingyang 徐景暘.<sup>45</sup> Most of the painting subjects named are secular. Only about five percent of the roughly 120 recorded in *Pu'an ji* and its supplement *Pu'an ji buyi* 補遺 were of Buddhist subjects. About the same number of Daoist subjects are listed, along with a handful of classic subjects such as *The Red Cliff* and *Tao Yuanming's Return*. The largest category of subject matter is landscape, followed by plants with literati associations—bamboo, plums, and orchids. One poem was inscribed on an ink study of orchids by the “monk of Wu, Xuechuang,” whose works Xia Wenyan deemed only fit for monks’ quarters.<sup>46</sup> This seems less derogatory than originally intended in light of the aesthetic cultivation of monks like Laifu.

Just over half of the paintings cited in Laifu’s *Pu'an ji* are identified by artist and title. About 40 percent of the artists are “old masters” of the Song and earlier periods. Among the Yuan artists, Zhao Mengfu, his descendants, and followers are particularly prominent, and Gao Kegong 高克恭 (1248–1310) is represented by three works. Paintings by Laifu’s secular contemporaries include four by Wang Meng, three by Wang Mian 王冕 (1287–1359), two by Fang Congyi 方從義 (ca. 1301–after 1378), and one by Ni Zan 倪瓚 ((1301–1374). From this list alone, we would be unlikely to guess that Laifu was a Buddhist monk. Even the paintings of Buddhist subjects recorded in *Pu'an ji*, such as luohans, *Guanyin*, and *Puxian* (*Samantabhadra*) *Washing the Elephant*, would have been as much at home in the scholar’s studio as in the abbot’s quarters. Three of the luohan paintings are credited to famous old masters of the genre, Lu Lengjia 盧楞伽 (act. ca. 730–760), Wang Qihan 王齊翰 (act. ca. 961–975), and Fanlong 梵隆 (d. before 1187). The great Northern Song figure painter and devout Buddhist, Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1041–1106), is represented by a painting of the early Chinese poet monk Zhidun 支遁 (314–366) judging a horse. Monks, of course, especially appreciated treatments of Buddhist themes by Li Gonglin, his monk follower Fanlong, and later artists who worked in his tradition.<sup>47</sup> Laifu’s follower Tanhuang 曇鋐, who compiled his master’s *Pu'an ji*, wrote a long colophon for a handscroll of *Puxian Washing the Elephant*, attributed to Li Gonglin, that eventually entered the Qing imperial collection.<sup>48</sup>

Laifu joined the scholar-official Song Lian and eminent monk Zongle in composing colophons for the famous *Long Scroll of Buddhist Images* by the twelfth-century master Zhang Shengwen 張勝溫, now in the National Palace Museum.<sup>49</sup> These colophons take us into the heart of Tianjie Monastery, mentioned earlier in connection with Chushi Fanqi. “The largest and most magnificent temple” in the capital, Tianjie Monastery had been the residence of Yuan Wenzong 文宗 (r. 1329–1331) when he was heir apparent and was converted into a monastery when he became emperor. In the early Ming, it was a hub of religious and secular activity, housing the scholars responsible for the Yuan history project led by Song Lian and the Central Buddhist Registry.<sup>50</sup> Many of the eminent monks summoned to the capital lodged at Tianjie Monastery, and it boasted at least one notable painter-monk in this period, Baojin 寶金, sobriquet Bifeng 碧峰, who was known for his landscapes and calligraphy.<sup>51</sup>

Song Lian’s colophon for the *Long Scroll* is not only rooted in his social transactions at Tianjie Monastery but also reflects his wider engagement with Buddhism and with art, which is well documented in his collected writings, *Song Xueshi wenji* 宋學士文集,<sup>52</sup> and in temple gazetteers. Song Lian composed many texts for monks’ stupas and temple steles, records of monastery reconstructions and restorations, accounts of hermitages of individual monks, inscriptions for copies of sutras, prefaces and inscriptions for the recorded sayings (*yulu*) and other writings of Chan masters, farewell compositions for traveling clerics, and records of the grand, imperially sponsored Buddhist offering assemblies in Nanjing. His writings on art include responses to paintings enjoyed in secular scholars’ studios as well as paintings made for the monasteries. They range over the full spectrum of paintings used in Buddhist settings: eulogies for portraits of famous monks, including Laifu and Zongle, images of Buddhist deities, and depictions of Buddhist sites.<sup>53</sup> His encomium for a gold- and green-painted image of the Fishbasket Guanyin (*Yulan Guanyin* 魚籃觀音) suggests the depth of his connection to Buddhist art in monastic contexts. According to Chün-fang Yü, he gave the “biography” of the Fishbasket Guanyin its mature form in this eulogy.<sup>54</sup> The commission went to an artist named Wu Fu 吳福 who worked the monastery circuit; Song Lian describes him elsewhere as famous in monasteries for his painting skill.<sup>55</sup>

Song Lian’s inscriptions on works by earlier masters include a poem for a painting *Five Swallows* by Muqi that can only be construed as laudatory:

Who sketches the young swallows descending from a clear sky,  
And beneath his brush is able to recreate the workings of nature?  
As seen on Xie [Lingyun]’s pond,<sup>56</sup>  
Willow fronds in misty warmth [by] a full expanse of water.<sup>57</sup>

Song Lian also recorded paintings in monks' collections and responded to monks' requests for inscriptions on paintings, including one from a Chan Master Dongshan 東山禪師 for an encomium for images of the Eighteen Luohans.<sup>58</sup> Song Lian tried to refuse the request, asking what need *luohans* had of words of praise and calling such praise superfluous. But the monk insisted, and Song Lian composed a poem in response. This Chan Master Dongshan was likely the same monk who solicited Song Lian's inscription for the *Long Scroll*.

The Linji Chan monk Jitan Zongle, sobriquet Quanshi 全室, whose inscription immediately follows Song Lian's on the *Long Scroll*, was one of the most eminent personalities, secular or religious, of his time. Zongle began as a disciple of the great master Xiaoyin Daxin 笑隱大訢 (1284–1344) at Middle Tianzhu Monastery in Hangzhou and eventually became the abbot of this temple. In the late Yuan he moved in elite literary circles, associating with leading scholars of the day. Shortly after the founding of the Ming, he was summoned to Nanjing, where he quickly won the favor of the Hongwu emperor. In 1372 Zongle composed Buddhist music for one of the great imperially sponsored Buddhist assemblies at which he discoursed on the dharma. He was appointed abbot of Tianjie Monastery, and in 1377, with the monk Ju'an Ruqi 具菴如玘 (1320–1385), he was commissioned to write sutra commentaries for promulgation throughout the empire. Herbert Franke described these commentaries as "among the last important Chinese contributions to the exegesis of Buddhist scriptures."<sup>59</sup> Late in 1378 the emperor sent Zongle on a mission to the Western Regions, i.e., Tibet, Nepal, and northeastern India, to collect Buddhist sutras not yet known to China. After he returned, late in 1381 (or early in 1382), he was appointed Right Buddhist Patriarch (*Youshanshi* 右善世) of the Central Buddhist Registry. Zongle was an accomplished scholar, versed in literature and the Confucian classics, and counted prominent laymen such as Song Lian, Wang Meng, and the poet Gao Qi 高啟 (1336–1374) his close friends. Zongle also introduced the talented younger monk Daoyan to the emperor.<sup>60</sup>

Zongle's literary collection, *Quanshi waiji* 全室外集, includes many poems for paintings.<sup>61</sup> Some were composed for pictures of monks' dwellings, but otherwise the selection is largely secular, extolling landscapes, ink bamboo, and related themes. Like Laifu, Zongle composed inscriptions for old masterworks, including two by Song emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101–1125), and for works by contemporary artists, notably Wang Meng.<sup>62</sup> The catalogue of the Qing imperial collection documents his writings, as well, on paintings of Buddhist subjects, such as the *Braided-robe Mañjuśrī* mentioned above, a copy of the Yaoshi (Bhaisajyaguru) Sutra with a *baimiao* image of the Buddha by Zhao Mengfu, and, of course, the *Long Scroll*.<sup>63</sup>



The colophons on the *Long Scroll* that document its history from the late fourteenth through the middle of the fifteenth century are of particular interest here not only because they testify to the activities of a monk art collector, but also because they report on the movement of the scroll through, as well as in and out of, clerical hands.<sup>64</sup> When Song Lian, Zongle, and Laifu wrote, the scroll belonged to Chan Master Dongshan Detai 東山禪師德泰, master of the Tianjie Monastery library and a follower of Zongle. According to Song Lian, Master Detai purchased the work at considerable expense and kept it to show to others. After Song Lian added his undoubtedly solicited, value-enhancing colophon to the scroll, he returned it to the monk. Zongle's colophon is dated to the autumn of 1378, when he was still the abbot of the monastery. Laifu wrote in the autumn of the following year, presumably also at the request of the master of the library.

Each of the three writers appears completely in character in his *Long Scroll* colophon, Song Lian as the government official and historian; Zongle as the Buddhist scholar, official, and spiritual advisor to the emperor; and Laifu as the poet monk. Song Lian dispatches with the identification of the artist quickly and wastes little ink on the visual elements of the scroll:

To the right is a scroll of Buddhist images painted by the Dali painting master Zhang Shengwen. To its left is an inscription that says: 'Painted for the Lizhen emperor Miaoxin.' After this is a record by the monk Miaoguang dated to the Shengde [period], fifth year, *gengzi*, first month, eleventh day. Everything is painted in color and gold and all is extremely fine. The calligraphy also cannot be said to be bad.

The heart of Song Lian's short text is the history of the Dali Kingdom, which he traces from the Han to the Yuan dynasties. He also attempts to connect the reign and cyclical dates of Miaoguang's colophon with a year in Chinese recorded history, namely the year corresponding to 1240 in the reign of Song Lizong 宋理宗.<sup>65</sup>

Zongle likewise dealt briefly with the artist, subject matter, and quality of the scroll: "To the right [is] a scroll of many images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas painted by the Dali native Zhang Shengwen. The painting technique is skillful and fine. It is truly a beautiful painting." Zongle was also interested in the historical circumstances of the scroll but from a more Buddhist perspective and possibly informed by his own service to the first Ming emperor. He notes that although the scroll depicts Buddhas, bodhisattvas, luohans, the Eight Classes, and other assemblies, it opens with the rulers of Zhang Shengwen's country and ends with the kings of sixteen states of India — this because the kings were outer guardians of the Buddha's dharma.

Laifu's respect for both the object and its owner is evident in the length and tone of his colophon, which consists of a long poem prefaced with the following remarks:

One case of images of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, luohans, various patriarchs, and other subjects painted by the Dali artisan Zhang Shengwen and collected by the Tianjie [monastery] Master of the Library Tai Dongshan. The application of color is very fine. The gold and emerald green are brilliant. It is like being present at an audience with the emperor, something very rare. Dongshan asked me to inscribe after it. Thereupon I burned incense, bowed in respect, and composed a eulogy....

Laifu's highly visual poem celebrates the dharma bodies of Buddha, visible everywhere, who are worshiped with donations of jewels, beautiful buildings, and paintings out of desire for limitless merit. He describes the painting and praises the painting's country of origin as a vassal state whose only religion is Buddhism. In his signature he identifies himself as a former monk of Lingyin Monastery in Hangzhou.

Two fifteenth-century colophons describe the subsequent transmission of the *Long Scroll* through clerical hands. Writing in 1413, monk Zengying 曾英 reports that Dongshan Tai, Master of the Library, had treasured the scroll and kept it carefully wrapped up, but after his death it was lost for a time. Later one of his disciples, not forgetting his master's "relics," found and bought it again, returned it to the monastery, and "ordered" Zengying to compose a colophon. Zengying obliged and returned it to him to show to his followers. Another art lover, Zengying, compared the artist's skill to that of Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 344–ca. 406) and Li Gonglin, and argued for the utility of images in saving people from drowning in the confusion and corruption of the world. He also reports that the library master obtained the scroll during his time of roaming from monastery to monastery, and that he had been Zongle's disciple.

A colophon dated to 1459 by an author whose signature is illegible continues the scroll's history. By this time, Jingkong 鏡空, abbot of Huideng Monastery 慧燈寺, had inherited the painting. Showing it to the writer, the abbot told of its unfortunate loss after the Tianjie Monastery library master's death and fortunate recovery by his own master, Yuefeng 月峰. In 1449, however, disaster struck again, this time a flood. The floodwaters rose quickly, suddenly inundating the case containing the paintings. Jingkong quickly pulled it from the water, but the pictures were soaked; they had curled up and peeled off their mountings, and could no longer be opened and examined. He invited a local scholar to remount them in a case, and beseeched

the unknown author to make a memorial record of this “precious inheritance of three generations.”

We encounter Dongshan again in colophons by Laifu and by a layman named Xie Ju 謝矩, composed for a transcription of the Diamond Sutra made by the great Southern Song calligrapher Zhang Jizhi 張即之 (1186–1266) in 1248. These colophons are the last of nine, ranging in date from 1316 to 1402, added to this album; eight are by monks. Amy McNair has discussed these colophons in some detail in her study of the critical reception of Zhang Jizhi’s calligraphy by secular scholars and Buddhist monks.<sup>66</sup> Both Laifu and Xie Ju offer further testimony to Dongshan’s activities as an art collector and to his followers’ transmission of objects he treasured. Writing in 1375, Laifu reports that Master of the Library Dongshan Tai showed him the scroll and asked him to compose a colophon for it. The colophon concludes with the lines:

As the Tathagata is revealed, we know that Layman Zhang Jizhi was able with the tip of his brush to release the great glory of Buddha and to write of his works. This is why Library Master Dongshan has treasured and circulated it.

Xie Ju’s colophon, dated to 1402, describes the continuous transmission of the precious calligraphy by Dongshan’s followers:

When the Huideng Monastery monk Venerable Dongshan Tai was Master of the Library at Tianjie [Monastery], he obtained and kept [this sutra] as a treasure. It has been years since Dongshan passed away. His followers have also been able to treasure what their master treasured, and I was able to view it with them. I sigh that this precious sutra of the Buddhists is like the calligraphy of a sage treasured by Confucians. Certainly it should be treasured. Jizhi was famous in the Song dynasty for his calligraphy, and we Confucians treasure his ink traces. Dongshan was also able to treasure [such a trace] and his followers were also able to love it and hand it down. This is also something Buddhist, yet respected by us Confucians, [and] admirable indeed!<sup>67</sup>

A few more examples of scrolls with Buddhist themes that have colophons by notable fourteenth-century monks will suffice to fill out this picture of the clerical reception of such paintings in the late Yuan and early Ming periods. The handscroll *Dīpaṅkara Buddha Prophesying Shakyamuni*, a formal rendering of a scriptural subject in colors on silk, is exactly the type of painting we would expect to find in a monastery library. Dated to the Yuan dynasty by the compilers of the Qing imperial catalogue, this painting is now regarded as a



Song work.<sup>68</sup> Two eminent late Yuan–early Ming monks, Hongdao 弘道 and Yichu Shouren 一初守仁, composed the colophons. Writing in the spring of 1387, Hongdao discusses the scriptural source of the picture, the *Taizi ruiyi benqi jing* account of Shakyamuni’s previous life in which he met Dipamkara Buddha and was designated a future Buddha, and identifies himself as “Former abbot of Hangzhou Upper Tianzhu Doctrine (*jiang* 講) Monastery.” The second writer, Shouren, a native of Fuchun (present-day Fuyang) near Hangzhou and a noted poet and calligrapher, also lived at Upper Tianzhu Monastery at the beginning of the Ming.<sup>69</sup> He prefaces his eulogy by identifying the owner of the scroll as a man of high rank,<sup>70</sup> and by offering conventional praise of its lofty, antique brushwork and pure, beautiful spirit.

*Luohans Crossing the Water*, a handscroll in ink and colors on silk recorded in the catalogue of religious paintings and texts in the Qing imperial collection, is followed by nine colophons by monks of the Hangzhou area.<sup>71</sup> The first was written in 1408 by Xintai 心泰, sixty-first abbot of Mount Jing. He tells of sitting in the Acala (Imperturbable) Studio on Mount Jing when Venerable Monk Mi’an Jing 謚菴靖上人 brought the painting to show him. He describes it as having “sixteen figures, all with the inner mysterious mind of the bodhisattva and outward manifestation of the *śrāvaka*, who have not attained final extinction (*parinirvāṇa*), but receive offerings in the human world and constitute a field of blessedness.” He identifies each figure in turn, admires their wonderful spirit, varied forms and attitudes, and unfathomable transformations, and asks rhetorically: “How can words describe them?” He attempted such a description at the request of the owner of the painting, a retired Assistant Magistrate living at home in Hangzhou. When Xintai wrote, he was eighty-three years (*sui*). The owner no doubt sought the colophon because words from the brush of such a distinguished cleric would have enhanced the cultural and perhaps even the spiritual power of the picture, and the abbot responded dutifully, if not very imaginatively. The other monk writers, each of whom added an eight-line Buddhist poem referring to the painting subject, were associated with Mount Tianzhu in Hangzhou.<sup>72</sup>

A painting credited to Li Gonglin afforded the eminent monk Puxia, who was appointed Right Buddhist Patriarch in the Central Buddhist Registry at the opening of the Ming, an opportunity to demonstrate his literary gifts and engagement with art history for a fellow monk.<sup>73</sup> In 1398 Puxia wrote the first colophon for the ink-on-silk handscroll *Danxia Calling on Layman Pang*, a painting of a subject drawn from the Chan repertoire.<sup>74</sup> The colophon reads:

The [*Xuanhe*] *huapu* [宣和]畫譜 praises Li Longmian [Gonglin] as being ‘skilled in painting figures, capable of separating and distinguishing forms

and appearances so as to cause viewers to understand at a glance their positions in dwelling pavilions, mountain groves, grassy wilds, or village hamlets. The manners and bearings of those who were moving or working, knitting their brows or stretching, or looking up or down were all painted in separate strokes, and the high and humble, the noble and the base, were all distinguished, and he did not, like commonplace painters, blur these into uniformity.' Today I looked at the painting of 'Tan-hsia [Danxia] Calling on Layman P'ang' owned by Tung-po [Dongbai 東白], the monk Ch'iung [Jiong 岡上人]. The husband, wife, and son talking while sitting on the floor, the girl greeting the guest, the visitor asking after the master, and the attendant holding a plaited hat and grasping a staff are each the ultimate in conception and attitude. The arrangement of the thatched roof, the earthenware jar, the wicker strainer, and the ax and mallet are precise and knowing while the [scenes with] trees, bamboo, and rocks are all [desolate] with an unworldly air—precisely what a common craftsman in pursuit of gain cannot imitate. Although the Xuanhe seal and inscription are not preserved, connoisseurs can judge for themselves. Dongbai treasures this, but thinks of Danxia as a Daoist who lodged his desires with old Layman Pang. Dongbai must find this apart from the brush and silk, so I am unable to discuss it in detail. On the day of winter solstice of the year [equivalent to 1389] in the Hongwu reign-era, written by the monk from Kuaiji, Puxia.<sup>75</sup>

Clearly, monk Puxia was familiar with the standard art historical literature and confident enough in his own connoisseurship to connect this painting with one recorded in *Xuanhe huapu* and authenticate it as a work by Li Gonglin, despite its lack of Song-dynasty documentation.

Puxia was also one of nine fourteenth-century monks who composed inscriptions for a painting of Vimalakirti by Li Gonglin recorded in an early seventeenth-century catalogue, by which time this scroll was secular hands.<sup>76</sup> When Puxia wrote, the scroll belonged to a monk. Like his colophon quoted above, this inscription largely deals with the iconography, but also talks about the quality of the object and its history. He opens with the following observations:

Li Longmian [Gonglin] did this picture of "Asking after the Health of Vimalakirti." [As for] the truth or falsity of the brushwork, there are certainly those who can distinguish it. Many great masters of earlier times wrote after it. Tianmin 天民, Venerable (Monk) Ying 應 of Central Wu [Suzhou], obtained and kept it. One day he brought it out, and again asked me to make a record after it ...

Puxia wrote in the autumn of 1384 in the Raining Flowers Hall 雨華堂, probably at Bei Chan Monastery 北禪寺, in Suzhou. The colophon immediately preceding his was written by Xintai, abbot of Mount Jing, the lead writer for the handscroll *Luohans Crossing the Water* discussed above.<sup>77</sup>

### Repositioning

To restate a basic point made earlier in this essay, Buddhist monks interested in art had catholic tastes like those of their secular counterparts. Their aesthetic interests were not limited to artworks devoted to Buddhist figures or teachings. Returning to this theme and picking up threads from earlier discussions of paintings inscribed by Laifu and Zongle, the final section of this essay will turn to monks associated with one of so-called Four Great Masters of the Yuan, Wang Meng. Wang Meng's interaction with the Buddhist clergy has been well explored by Chang Kuang-pin, Richard Vinograd, and others largely concerned with the life and art of the artist.<sup>78</sup> The following discussion is primarily a repositioning designed to shift attention from the artist to his clerical audience.

Among the monks who associated with Wang Meng and inscribed his paintings, none became more famous or influential than his younger contemporary Daoyan, or Yao Guangxiao. Daoyan belonged to the same Linji dharma lineage as Zongle, and when important monks were sought to recite sutras upon the death of Empress Ma in 1382, Zongle recommended him. Daoyan was subsequently assigned as an adviser to the court of the Prince of Yan, Zhu Di 燕王朱棣. Expert in military strategy as well as civil affairs, the monk was a key player in the prince's usurpation of the throne in 1402 and reign as the Yongle 永樂 emperor (1403–1424).<sup>79</sup> Daoyan served the new emperor in various capacities, including head of the Central Buddhist Registry and Junior Preceptor of the Heir Apparent. When he was near death, the emperor called on him and inquired about his final wishes. Daoyan asked for the release from prison of Puxia, a monk we met earlier as the author of a colophon for the scroll *Danxia Calling on Layman Pang*. Puxia had been imprisoned for purportedly cursing the Yongle emperor when he was a rebellious prince. That Daoyan's wish was honored is compelling testimony to his hold on the affections of the emperor.<sup>80</sup> Other sides of Daoyan's personality appear in his associations with leading literati of his native area, Suzhou, notably Gao Qi and his circle.<sup>81</sup> Not surprisingly, Daoyan's collected writings include poems and colophons for paintings of secular subjects such as ink bamboo and ink plum as well as encomia for portraits of monks and Buddhist images.<sup>82</sup> His own talents included the standard literati trio: poetry, calligraphy, and painting. His calligraphy was said to possess an antique elegance and sinewy strength. As a painter he was known for his ink bamboo.<sup>83</sup> His work in this genre may be represented by a close-up view of thin, sinuous



stalks of tall bamboo by a flowing stream in hanging-scroll format and dated 1409, formerly (?) in a Hong Kong collection.<sup>84</sup>

A poem by Daoyan appears on Wang Meng's *Bamboo, Rocks and Flowing Stream*, a hanging scroll possibly painted about 1364 and now in the National Palace Museum. The artist's own inscription dedicates the painting to the Daoist Xi Yingzhen 席應珍 (1302–1381), a good friend of Daoyan. Alongside Daoyan's poem is one by another of his literary associates, the poet Wang Xing 王行. Daoyan signs himself "Monk Yan" 僧衍, and his poem may betray Buddhist sentiment in its evocation of transient beauty, but it is largely a remembrance of friendship:

Branch tips blown by brief gusts of wind brush the mountain torrent,  
Cold shadows of pale clouds drift across the sunset.  
I still think of the deep autumn night in the forest lodge,  
When we raised the lamp wick and listened to the rain.<sup>85</sup>

Daoyan was in Wang Meng's company again, figuratively speaking, when he added a colophon to *Listening to the Rain Pavilion* (*Tingyu lou* 聽雨樓), a painting-and-poetry scroll dedicated to the eponymous pavilion, a famous literati gathering place in Suzhou owned by Lu Shiheng 盧士恆. The key poem was written for Lu Shiheng's father, Lu Shanfu 廬山甫, by Zhang Yu 張雨 (1277–1348) in the last year of his life. Wang Meng painted his *Listening to the Rain Pavilion* picture in the pavilion in 1365 in the company of Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–74), who composed two poems matching Zhang Yu's rhyme scheme. The scroll continued to grow with the addition of many more poems and inscriptions by notable personalities of the period. By the time Lu Shiheng solicited Daoyan's colophon in 1369, Suzhou, the stronghold of the dynastic contender Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321–1367), had been besieged and defeated by the armies of Zhu Yuanzhang. Viewing the scroll evoked nostalgia in the monk, who lamented the scarcity of such "ink traces" of the previous generation and was moved by encountering so many "old friends" in the colophons.<sup>86</sup>

Wang Meng's oeuvre includes a number of depictions of monks' dwellings. Such paintings were visual counterparts to the literary records of monks' hermitages composed by Song Lian and others. A well-known example is *The Iris and Orchid Hall* (芝蘭堂圖) painted for the monk Gulin Changgong 古林昌公 of Hangzhou, a version of which remains in the National Palace Museum.<sup>87</sup> The artist's long dedication (transcribed by Yu He 俞和) is followed by a poem by Laifu likely written when he was abbot of Lingyin Monastery in Hangzhou. Other monks and laymen added poems as well.<sup>88</sup>

James Cahill has compared the version of *The Iris and Orchid Hall* in the National Palace Museum with Wang Meng's *Forest Dwelling at Juqu* (具區林屋),

which was most likely painted for Rizhang Zucheng 日章祖僞 (d. 1379).<sup>89</sup> Rizhang, a monk of the Suzhou area, was summoned to the famous Waguan Monastery 瓦官寺 in Nanjing in 1372, ordered to discourse on the law at the great Tianjie Monastery, and was favored with several audiences with the emperor. Three years later he was allowed to return to his home monastery. To mark this occasion, Wang Meng painted a hanging scroll, *Leisure Studio by Spring and Rocks* 泉石閒齋, and inscribed a poem.<sup>90</sup> Zongle added a poetic inscription dated to 1375, and the monk Jiugao Miaosheng 九皋妙聲 (1308–1384?), yet another prominent Suzhou cleric summoned to Nanjing, added another.<sup>91</sup>

Wang Meng was staying with Zongle when a monk named Ji Xuanjin 濟玄津 brought him a small paper handscroll and requested a picture of his Vine-covered Wall Mountain Dwelling. Wang Meng obliged with the *Luobi shanfang tu* 蘿壁山房圖 and a poem that opens with the lines: “Green vines creep over the old wall; the flowers’ fragrance disperses the spring clouds.” In a note following the poem, Wang Meng tells how it amused Zongle:

Old Quanshi [Zongle] took a look, shook his head, and gave a little laugh. That night, I shut the door and fell soundly asleep. Deep in the night there was an urgent knock at the door. I got up to see about it. It was Quanshi. He chanted the aforesaid poem several times; together we chanted and laughed until the fifth drum, and then we parted. In the morning, accordingly, I inscribed [this] at the beginning of the scroll.

Zongle composed a poem in response, dated to the autumn of 1382.<sup>92</sup> This was about the time clerics were converging on Nanjing for the funeral of Empress Ma, who died in September of that year.<sup>93</sup> Seven more monks added colophons to the *Luobi shanfang tu*. Four were Zongle’s contemporaries: Ju’an Ruqi, who joined Zongle in writing imperially commissioned sutra commentaries in 1377; Hongdao, who wrote one of the colophons for the *Dīpaṅkara* handscroll discussed above; Tong’an Yijian 同菴夷簡, and Dexiang Zhi’an 德祥止菴 (1330–1392). Tong’an Yijian’s colophon for *Luobi shanfang tu* is dated to 1384. He and Dexiang Zhi’an were the seventy-eighth and seventy-ninth abbots, respectively, of Jingci Monastery in Hangzhou, where the scroll ended up.<sup>94</sup> In the early fifteenth century it was kept by the master of Jingci Monastery library, who solicited more inscriptions for it, including one titled “Record of the Vine-covered Wall Mountain Hermitage” composed in 1430 by the Jingci Monastery abbot, Tiantai monk Zhengxu 正需. Zhengxu wrote:

The Master’s name was Xuanjin. His nature was pure and refined. He was famous in Chan circles for his exposition, chanting, and skill in calligraphy.

Many famous men of the time respected him. The gentleman Wang Shuming [Meng] painted the mountain hermitage picture and inscribed a poem for it. The old masters Zongle, Hongdao, Ju'an, and Zhi'an all composed poems to its beauty. Xuanjin has been dead for over fifty years. The poem-scroll is now in the possession of Xizong Librarian Yi. I came to Nanping (Jingci Monastery), and one day Xizong took out the scroll to show me....<sup>95</sup>

Wang Meng was subsequently charged with a similar but more ambitious project, namely, his *Picture of Mount Taibai* (*Taibaishan tu* 太白山圖), a depiction of Tiantong Monastery 天童寺 outside of Ningbo, one of the greatest monasteries in the southeast. The scroll graced in turn a number of important collections, including the Qing imperial collection, and is now in the Liaoning Provincial Museum.<sup>96</sup> Vinograd has discussed this scroll at length, noting its topographical specificity and characterizing it as a “site portrait,” pointing out the colophons by prominent Buddhists such as Zongle and Daoyan, and identifying the recipient as the Tiantong Monastery master Zuo'an Yuanliang 左菴原良.<sup>97</sup> Building on Vinograd's work, Ling-en Lu has demonstrated that it was indeed painted for Zuo'an Yuanliang, former abbot of Tiantong Monastery, to commemorate his rebuilding of the temple's main hall, and thus it functioned as “a commemoration of occasion, eulogy of the recipient, a portrait of temple property, and a remind[er] of the temple history.” In certain of these respects it is comparable to paintings of scholars' retreats, but its “Buddhist concerns and public quality” distinguish it from such celebrations of eremitism.<sup>98</sup> Lu based her interpretation on a close reading of the picture, analysis of the colophons, and information drawn from the temple gazetteer, *Tiantong si zhi* 天童寺志, which includes the abbot's biography. Zuo'an, whose style name was Yuanming 原明, was the Chan Master posthumously known as Yuanliang 元良. A native of nearby Ninghai, he took up residence at Tiantong Monastery in 1358 upon imperial order and was charged with rebuilding the main hall and casting a bronze statue of Buddha. Over the following decade he devoted himself to supporting and maintaining the monastery and then retired at the beginning of the Ming.<sup>99</sup> His scholarly character is suggested by the colophon by Xu Renchu 徐仁初, who tells how the monk entertained him with talk of poetry day and night and pulled the scroll from his sleeve to show him.<sup>100</sup> Colophons by Zuo'an on other paintings, such as Wang Meng's *Cloudy Forest Small Retreat* (*Yulin xiaoyin tu* 雲林小隱圖) and a *baimiao* painting of luohans by Fanlong, further document the monk's interest in painting.<sup>101</sup>

Four of the five colophons following *Picture of Mount Taibai* were written by monks, beginning with the artist's friend Zongle, who wrote in the winter of 1386 and signed himself “retired old man.”<sup>102</sup> His long descriptive poem extols the beauty



of Tiantong Monastery, refers to images in the painting, and speaks eloquently to the interaction of art and life in the monasteries:

Small White City [mountain], Great White Peak (Taibai feng),  
Twenty miles of pines between.  
A single path, layers of shade from a kingfisher-feather blue canopy,  
Rising midair, tier upon tier of green-haired dragons.  
Where the peaks of Taibai branch from the Jiulong Mountains,  
How great the ancient Buddhist palace!  
Stationary clouds of incense pair with Buddhist chants;  
Towers and pavilions reflect upside-down in the emptiness of  
the clear pond.  
In years past, Zuo'an expounded the dharma here,  
And the valleys echoed with the striking of the great bell.  
Now I live in the capital,  
But every night in dreams my soul is east of the Yin River [Ningbo].  
Qiantang [Hangzhou] has a guest called Wang Meng,  
Who on behalf of the gentleman sketched these myriad pines.  
Mournfully between the buildings, an obscuring mist rises;  
Rustling beneath the chambers, a pure wind blows.  
Whence comes the son of Chan crossing beneath the pines,  
Wearing a long robe and big bamboo rain hat and carrying a bamboo staff?  
There is also a nobleman's escort, three or four gentlemen,  
At the mouth of Blue Grove Road, in red garments.  
When I first opened this scroll, I wished to shout;  
Welling up on the sea, the lofty mountains;  
From the obscure source of the clouds, the Jade Boy descends.  
There is a road that seems to connect to Heaven,  
I regret that in my whole life I have never been there.  
Alas, I am old! What will the future bring?  
After returning this scroll to the gentleman, I will put my hands in my  
sleeves and sit,  
With only my eyes sending off the wild geese flying south.<sup>103</sup>

Ten days after Zongle wrote this poem, the monk Mengguan Shouren 夢觀守仁, who was staying with Zongle, added an eight-line poem. This is the same Shouren who wrote, probably about the same time, for the aforementioned *Dīpaṅkara* handscroll.<sup>104</sup> The Tiantai monk Qingjun 清濬 wrote the third poetic inscription, also of eight lines. The more modest length of these two poems suggests their authors'

subordinate relationship to the first writer, the eminent Zongle. Xu Renchu was responsible for the fourth colophon. The latest colophon, dated to 1417, is signed Yao Guangxiao, i.e., the monk Daoyan.<sup>105</sup> This poem, another lengthy characterization of Tiantong Monastery and its beauties, was written at the request of former Tiantong Chan Master Yunhuo 雲壑, who was then in possession of the scroll. So again, a famous work made for a monk was passed down to another monk, who sought to further enhance its value by acquiring for it the autograph of a famous monk of his own time, in this case, the most influential monk of the early fifteenth century.

### Conclusion

The material presented in this essay is the tip of a very large iceberg, the wealth of written and pictorial documents that admit us to the world of monks who appreciated, inscribed, and collected art in the great monasteries of southeastern China during the Yuan–Ming transition. The examples presented here only hint at the intricate network of aesthetic exchange woven by these monks. Given their numbers and mobility, it may be impossible to track their activities and recognize all their relationships with secular literati and artists and with each other. These examples, however, should suffice to demonstrate the extent to which the monasteries were equivalent to the court and the scholars' studios as places to view, study, and appreciate art. Literati monks acquired art by the same means as their secular counterparts, namely, inheritance, purchase, exchange, or as gifts, and similarly shared their treasures, collected valuable inscriptions for them, and made them famous. Works of art could stay in clerical hands for generations, passing from master to disciple, monastery to monastery, sometimes slipping away, and sometimes returning. Paintings and poetic eulogies of monasteries and monks' hermitages should be understood as counterparts of pictures and written accounts of scholars' studios, palace gardens, and other elite secular properties. These domains, of course, were by no means parallel universes. They were thoroughly intertwined. Given the many points of intersection between the abbots' quarters, the court, and the scholars' studios, knowledge of one necessarily informs understanding of the others.

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## NOTES

I am greatly indebted to Naomi Richard for finding time to work her editorial magic on this manuscript, which arrived on her desk at the eleventh hour. I am also very grateful to Chang Qing for his assistance in translating many of the texts quoted and used in the preparation of this article. Errors that remain are entirely my own. Finally, I most sincerely thank Nancy S. Steinhardt for all of her work on the project represented by this issue of *Ars Orientalis*, including her many suggestions for the improvement of this article.

- 1 Xia Wenyan, *Tuhui baojian* (preface 1365); *juan* 4 (Muqi), *juan* 5 (Xuechuang); reprint, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* 中國書畫全書 (hereafter ZGSHQS), vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), 877, 890.
- 2 An exception to this pattern is James Cahill's classic *Chinese Painting*, where Song Buddhist and secular literati share a chapter, "The Literati and Ch'an Painters of the Sung Dynasty," and he observes: "It may be questioned whether a valid division can in fact be made [between the literati and Ch'an schools], whether they should not be regarded as a single school of amateur artists in styles they overlap; perhaps they should be distinguished, if at all, on the basis of attitude: the more intellectual approach of the Confucian literatus as against the intuitive one of the Ch'an monk." James Cahill, *Chinese Painting* (Lausanne: Skira, 1960), 96.
- 3 Here too there are important exceptions, such as Yoshiaki Shimizu's study of the 14th-century painter-monk Yin Tuoluo, "Six Narrative Paintings by Yin T'o-lo: Their Symbolic Content," *Archives of Asian Art* 33 (1980): 6–37.
- 4 Deborah Del Gais Muller, "Hsia Wen-yen and His *T'u-hui pao-chien* (Precious Mirror of Painting)," *Ars Orientalis* 18 (1988): 131.
- 5 Xia Wenyan, *Tuhui baojian*; 4, 877.
- 6 Tang Hou, *Gujin huaqian*; reprint, ZGSHQS, vol. 2, 901. For a context for this remark, see Amy McNair, "Buddhist Literati and Literary Monks: Social and Religious Elements in the Critical Reception of Zhang Jizhi's Calligraphy," in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 80.
- 7 Zhuang Su, *Huaji buyi*, 1298; reprint, ZGSHQS, vol. 2, 914. Translation adapted from Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1985), 138–39.
- 8 As Maggie Bickford has observed, "some of Wu Taisu's biographies seem to be the unacknowledged source of entries in Xia Wenyan's *Tuhui baojian*." *Bones of Jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985), 76.
- 9 Wu Taisu, *Songzhai meipu*, ca. 1351; reprint, ZGSHQS, vol. 2, 702. The monastery is Changxiang Monastery 長相寺, and Wu Taisu further reports that Muqi was said to be loved there.
- 10 Xia Wenyan, *Tuhui baojian*, *juan* 4, 877.
- 11 Jan Fontein and Money L. Hickman, *Zen Painting and Calligraphy* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1970), xxxvi.
- 12 See Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in *Curators of the Buddha: A Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*, ed. Donald Lopez (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 107–60.
- 13 Wider evidence of the reception of Muqi's paintings, for instance, is readily found in catalogue records indexed in John Calvin Ferguson (Fu Kaisen), *Lidai zhuhu hua mu* 歷代著錄畫目 (Catalogue of recorded paintings through the dynasties) (Nanjing, 1934; reprint, Taipei: Zhonghua shu ju, 1968), 180; see Fachang 法常. The paintings listed are recorded in standard Chinese catalogues of the seventeenth and



eighteenth centuries. Two paintings in the catalogue of the Qing imperial collection carry colophons by the famous Ming collector Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525–1590). Authenticity issues aside, such records confirm that Muqi did not disappear from the Chinese art-historical memory. Poems by writers such as Xu Jisun 徐集孫 (13th c.), Ma Zhen 馬臻 (fl. 1302), Zhang Yu 張昱 (1289–1371), and Song Lian composed for paintings by Muqi, likewise document continued interest in his art; Chen Gaohua 陳高華 *Song Liao Jin huajia shiliao* 宋遼金畫家史料 (Historical materials relating to Song, Liao and Jin painters) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1984), 778–80; Nancy Wei, “Mu-ch’i and Zen Painting” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974), 4, 46–73. Ogawa Hiromitsu has also discussed the favorable reviews received by Muqi in an effort to rehabilitate him as one of the great painters of China, arguing: “He was not a minor Chinese painter who was not highly regarded in his own country, nor was he a minor painter who only achieved great acclaim in Japan.” Ogawa Hiromitsu, “The Chinese Painter Muqi,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 57 (1999): 33.

- 14 Gregory P. A. Levine, *Daitokuji: The Visual Cultures of a Zen Monastery* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005). Many themes developed in this model study resonate with and suggest approaches to recovering lost stories of art in China’s great monasteries.
- 15 On the paintings brought to Manpukuji from China, see Patricia Graham, “Manpukuji,” in *The Dictionary of Art*, 20 (New York: Grove’s Dictionaries, 1996), 286.
- 16 In Beijing, for instance, Fayuan Monastery 法源寺, home of the Beijing Buddhist Academy, and Guangji

Monastery 廣濟寺, home of the Buddhist Association of China, house works salvaged from defunct monasteries, and Wanshou Monastery 萬壽寺 is now the home of the Beijing Art Museum. As Lauer reports in her essay, “Changing Media, The Transmission of Images in Yuan Painting,” the Chinese Buddhist Association began in the early 1950s to make an inventory of artworks in temples, and this list was instrumental in protecting some works during the Cultural Revolution; see p. 107.

- 17 Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 33; see especially 110–12.
- 18 Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite Moments: West Lake and Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute, 2001), 122.
- 19 Uta Lauer, *A Master of His Own — the Calligraphy of the Chan Abbot Zhongfeng Mingben (1262–1323)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002).
- 20 Marsha Weidner, “Portraits and Personalities in the Temples of Ming Beijing: Responses to Portraits of the Monk Daoyan,” in *The History of Painting in East Asia: Essays on Scholarly Method* (Taipei: Rock Publishing International, 2008), 224–42; “Picturing Monks as Connoisseurs and Monasteries as Sites of Aesthetic Engagement,” in *Zurich Studies in the History of Art, Georges-Bloch-Annual* 13/14 (Zurich: University of Zurich, Institute of Art History, 2006/07), 399–417.
- 21 Timothy Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 141. Brook cites *Pingshan tang tuzhi* (1705), which cites in turn “a text of the mid-Ming.”
- 22 The patterns of aesthetic engagement in monastic settings described here were well established in the Song and earlier times and perpetuated in the later Ming

and Qing periods. Thus this study participates in the conversation about continuities between “the mid-imperial era from Tang to Song (roughly the seventh through thirteenth centuries) and the late imperial era spanning the mid-Ming through Qing dynasties (ca. 1550–1900)” represented by the anthology *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard Von Glahn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). From the point of view of art history, however, exception must be taken with the editors’ characterization of the period from 1100 to 1400 broadly and of the Yuan dynasty narrowly, as “an artificial chasm created by our shared ignorance of developments in Chinese society during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1271–1368),” a “historiographical black hole” (pp. 1, 35). The Yuan dynasty has been a particular focus of art-historical concern for decades, rescued from the long shadow once cast by Song painting to become the lynchpin of our understanding of the entire literati painting tradition. The dedication of a conference to Yuan painting in 2006 demonstrates the hold that this seminal age still has on our imagination. At the same time it demonstrates our continued reliance on dynastic periods to frame our conversations. We can take Smith and Von Glahn’s formulation of an epoch that embraces two periods of regime change as a challenge, one of many that might be identified, to our continued use of dynastic divisions for art-historical periodization. Craig Clunas addresses this issue succinctly in praising Jonathan Hay’s *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*: “The tendency of historians and art historians to work within dynastic boundaries, to treat dynastic transitions as significant events at all levels, and to use the preceding or

succeeding dynasty as the 'other' that makes sense of their argument is here challenged in an exemplary way, and should act as a brake in the future on the headlong rush to dynastic exceptionalism," *Art Bulletin* (Dec. 2002): 688. In artistic vitality or art-historical consequence, the Yuan–Ming transition period does not compare with the Ming–Qing transition illuminated by Hay, but the episodes described here suggest the rewards of working across the dynastic divide at the end of the fourteenth century.

- 23 *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976; hereafter DMB), 1393.
- 24 DMB, 638–41; *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7, *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 142.
- 25 Brook, *Praying for Power*, 141–42.
- 26 On Yin Tuoluo and Chushi Fanqi, see Shimizu, "Six Narrative Paintings," 6–7. Chushi Fanqi's inscription on a painting by the Japanese monk Moku'an Rei'en 默庵靈淵 (d. 1345) is recorded in *Tōhaku Gasetsu*; Fontein and Hickman, *Zen Painting and Calligraphy*, 151.
- 27 DMB, 423.
- 28 Shimizu, "Six Narrative Paintings," 7.
- 29 DMB, 423.
- 30 Tao Zongyi, *Shushi huiyao* (preface 1376); reprint, ZGSHQS, vol. 3, 67.
- 31 Shimizu, "Six Narrative Paintings," 7–10.
- 32 Song Lian wrote his epitaph, and Daoyan, a.k.a. Yao Guangxiao was one of his biographers; DMB, 424.
- 33 *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7, 145–6.
- 34 *Chan zong shi cheng ji* 禪宗師承記, comp. Shuiyue zhai zhuren 水月齋主人 (Xindian: Yuanming chubanshe, 2000) 597; Ide Seinosuke, "Introduction to Jianxin Laifu's *Dangyouji* (with a brief chronology of Jianxin Laifu)," *Bijutsu kenkyū* (Journal of Art Studies) 373 (2000): 210–17.
- 35 Ide, "Introduction to Jianxin Laifu's *Dangyouji*," 3, 218–31.
- 36 *Zhongguo meishujia renming cidian* 中國美術家人名辭典 (hereafter ZGMSJ), ed. Yu Jianhua 俞劍華 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1981), 470.
- 37 In addition to the self-encomium by Laifu, the portrait has an encomium by Zhang Zhu 張翥 transcribed by Yang Yi 楊彝; both are dated to 1365. Ide Seinosuke, "A Portrait of Chien-chen Lai-fu of Manzaiji Temple," *Bijutsu shi* 美術史 (Journal of the Japan Art History Society) 119 (1986); also see the related article "Manzaiji no Itō Tokken zō" (An Image of Priest Ikō Tokken in the Manzai-ji), *Butkyō geijutsu* (Ars Buddica) 166 (1986), 50–64. For the portrait of Laifu and the painting of Budai, see *Gen jidai no kaiga: Mongoru sekai teikoku no isseiki* (Nara: Yamato Bunkakan, 1998), 77, 67. The half-length image of the Braided-robe Manjusri is reproduced in *Comprehensive Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Paintings, Second Series* (*Chūgoku kaiga sōgō zuroku, Zokuhen* 中國繪畫綜合圖錄續編), ed. Toda Teisuke and Ogawa Hiromitsu, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), JM18-045.
- 38 Ahn Hwi-Joon, "Paintings of the Nawa-Monju — Manjusri Wearing a Braided Robe," *Archives of Asian Art* 24 (1970–1971): 36–57.
- 39 Ahn, "Paintings of the Nawa-Monju," 41–44.
- 40 James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 279; Ahn, "Paintings of the Nawa-Monju," 41.
- 41 Ahn, "Paintings of the Nawa-Monju," 41.
- 42 *Bidian zhulin* 秘殿珠林 (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1971), 144.
- 43 For instance, a *Raising the Alms Bowl* handscroll with a colophon by Laifu was in the Qing imperial collection, where the painting is catalogued as an anonymous Song work of the second rank; *Bidian zhulin* 秘殿珠林 (1744; reprint, Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1971), 132.
- 44 *Pu'an ji* and *Pu'an ji buyi* 補遺 in *Chan men yi shu* 禪門逸書, section 1, vol. 7 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1980).
- 45 *Pu'an ji*, juan 3, 59a; ZGMSJ, 715.
- 46 *Pu'an ji buyi*, 146.
- 47 A well-known example is the *Sixteen Luohans* handscroll attributed to Fanlong, now in the collection of the Freer Gallery, which has colophons by Zhongfeng Mingben, and Chushi Fanqi's teacher Yuansou Xingduan 元叟行端 (1255–1341); Thomas Lawton, *Freer Gallery of Art Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition II. Chinese Figure Painting* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1973), 98–99. An early Ming case is recorded in a colophon by the scholar-official Wang Zhi 王直 (1379–1462) for a *Sixteen Luohans* handscroll credited to Li Gonglin; Wang was shown the painting by Hongfu 洪福, a monk of Baihua Monastery 百華 [寺] in Xin'an 新淦, who had inherited it from his late master Zhufeng 竺峰; *Bidian zhulin*, 108–9.
- 48 *Bidian zhulin*, 107.
- 49 *Gugong shuhua lu* 故宮書畫錄 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1966), juan 4, 77–85.
- 50 DMB, 1319–20.
- 51 ZGMSJ, 1521; Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮, *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵剎志 (1627; reprint, Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1976), juan 16, 2b. A copy of the Amitabha Sutra transcribed by Baojin in 1365 in Longji (later Nanjing) is found above a hanging-scroll painting of Amitabha in a garden. This painting, signed Zhang Wo 張渥 and dated to 1336, is recorded in *Bidian zhulin xubian*, 116, and now in the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

- 52 Song Lian, *Song Xueshi wenji, Sibucongkan jibu*, 四部叢刊集部, vols. 1502–1515 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1922) *juan* 27, 4b–6a;
- 53 Of particular interest is a record of the Prajñā Pine, which tells the story of a pine tree planted before a monk's hermitage in the Yuan dynasty, and the painting of the site by Zhao Mengfu's nephew Lin Zishan 林子山 in the early Hongwu period; Song Lian, *Song Xueshi wenji*, *juan* 42, 10a.
- 54 Song Lian, *Song Xueshi wenji*, *juan* 51; Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin, The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 421.
- 55 Song Lian, *Song Xueshi wenji*, *juan* 45, 13a.
- 56 Probably a reference to Xie Lingyun's (385–443) poem "Ascending the Tower by the Pond," which includes the lines: "池塘生春草, 楊柳變鳴禽 (The bank of the pond brings forth spring grass, The willows are transformed by singing birds)." Song Lian, *Song Xueshi wenji*, *juan* 32, 20a; Nancy Wei, "Mu-ch'i and Zen Painting," 62.
- 58 Song Lian, *Song Xueshi wenji*, *juan* 17, 17b–18a. Among other examples of colophons written in response to requests from monks are one on an image of Guanyin and another on a picture by Zhao Mengfu called *Pure Thoughts in a Mountain Monastery*; *juan* 12, 13b–14b; *juan* 18, 5b.
- 59 DMB, 1320.
- 60 DMB, 1319–21; Kazuo Enoki, "Tsong-le's Mission to the Western Regions in 1378–1382," *Oriens Extremus* 19, 1/2 (December 1972): 47–53; *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 903–4.
- 61 Zongle, *Quanshi waiji*, in *Siku quanshu zhenben liu ji*, no. 265 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1976). Zongle's inscriptions are also recorded in painting catalogues, such as Yu Fengqing's 郁逢慶 *Yushi shuhua tiba ji* 郁氏書畫題跋記, where we find his poem for a landscape painting collected by a monk simply identified as the Venerable Xin 心上人, possibly Xintai. *ZGSHQS*, vol. 4, 595.
- 62 Zongle, *Quanshi waiji*, *juan* 3, 17a, 24a; 4, 11b; 7, 4b, 6a–b. The paintings by Wang Meng were done for monks.
- 63 For the Yaoshi Sutra, see *Bidian zhulin*, 91–92.
- 64 *Gugong shuhua lu*, *juan* 4, 81–85; summarized and partially translated in Helen Chapin and Alexander Soper, "A Long Roll of Buddhist Images, II," *Artibus Asiae* 32.1 (1970): 184–86. The page numbers for "A Long Roll" refer to the original journal article rather than to the book in which the article was republished by *Artibus Asiae* in 1972.
- 65 Soper corrects this date to sixty years earlier; Soper, "A Long Roll of Buddhist Images, II"; 172.
- 66 McNair, "Buddhist Literati and Literary Monks," 82–84. The colophons are transcribed in Xu Bangda, *Gu shuhua guoyan yaolu: Jin, Sui, Tang, Wudai, Song shufa* (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 1987).
- 67 The translations follow McNair's with minor modifications. McNair, "Buddhist Literati and Literary Monks," 83–84.
- 68 *Liaoning sheng bowuguan cang hua ji, xu ji* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1980), no. 20; *Bidian zhulin xubian*, 127–28.
- 69 *ZGMSJ*, 190; Leng Xiao, *Hangzhou fojiao shi* (Hangzhou: Hangzhou shi fojiao xiehui, 1993), 228. The editors of *Bidian zhulin xubian* identify him as Shouren, zi Yichu, hao Mengguan, native of Fuyang, abbot of Lingyin Monastery, Right Buddhist Patriarch in the Hongwu period.
- 70 A certain Minister of State Dongxuan 東軒相國, possibly Fang Xing 方行, son of Fang Guozhen 方國珍 (1319/20–1374).
- Fang Xing's collected literary works are titled *Dongxuan ji*, and he was appointed Assistant Administrator of the Zhejiang Branch Secretariat in the Zhizheng period (1341–1368) of the late Yuan.
- 71 Identified in the imperial catalogue as a work of the first quality by an unknown Song-dynasty artist; *Bidian zhulin*, 131–32.
- 72 Tairu 臺如, Zhida 智達, Rulan 如蘭, Weishi 惟實, Zimou 子謨, Miaokan 妙侃 (two poems), Huiyun Shouxing 慧雲守行.
- 73 At the end of his life Puxia retired to the Great Bao'en si 報恩寺 in Nanjing; his biography composed by Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1365–1444) in Ge Yinliang, *Jinling fancha zhi*, *juan* 31, 34a–34b, 1059–1062.
- 74 *Kaikodo Journal* (Spring 1997): 60–62, 214–15.
- 75 Translation, with minor changes, from *Kaikodo Journal* (Spring 1997): 60. A second colophon was added by Yao Shou (1423–1495).
- 76 Zhang Chou 張丑, *Qinghe shuhua fang* 清河書畫舫 (preface 1616), *juan* 8, *xia*, 32b–36a; reprint, *ZGSHQS*, vol. 4, 286, 296. The monk authors were: Xingkui 行魁, 1309; Shanqing 善慶; Kele 可了; Ruozhou 若舟, 1332; Yuze Tianquan 餘澤天泉; Huqiu Benfu 虎丘本復; Qingchu 清澹, 1379; Jingshan Xintai 徑山心泰; and Kuaiji Puxia 蒲洽, 1384. Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636) added a short colophon in 1616, while on board a boat in Suzhou, saying that he had first seen it more than thirty years earlier in the collection of Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525–1590).
- 77 Song Guiguang 宋奎光, *Jingshan zhi*, 徑山志 (1624; reprint, Taipei: Zongqing guoshu chubanshe, 1994), *juan* 3, 24b–25a, pp. 266–67.
- 78 Chang Kuang-pin, *Yuan si dajia: Huang Gongwang, Wu Zhen, Ni Zan, Wang Meng* 元四大家: 黃公望·吳鎮·倪瓚·王蒙 (Four Great Masters of the Yuan), (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1975),



- (English) 38, 80–81, 85–86; (Chinese) 66–67, 70, and 91–205 *passim* (historical chronology). The chronology includes key dates in the lives of seven monks, including those discussed here. Richard Vinograd, “Wang Meng’s Pien Mountains: The Landscape of Eremitism in Later Fourteenth Century Chinese Painting,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 105–6, 156–62, 370, 376–84, 389.
- 79 DMB, 1561–1562.
- 80 DMB, 1561–1564.
- 81 Frederick W. Mote, *The Poet Kao Ch’i, 1336–1374* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 104–6.
- 82 Yao Guangxiao, *Du’an waiji xugao* 獨菴外集續稿 (preface 1403; reprint, Beijing: Xian zhuang shuju, 2003). I have yet to see his *Taoxuzi shi ji* 逃虛子詩集.
- 83 ZGMSJ, 590. A landscape handscroll in the San Antonio Museum has an inscription dated to 1382 with a signature and seal of Daoyan; see Alice R. M. Hyland, “Chinese Paintings in Texas Museum Collections,” *Ars Orientalis*, 25 (1995): 151–54.
- 84 *Zhongguo guhua ji* 中國古畫集 (collection of S. M. Siu or Shiao 蕭壽民) (Hong Kong: Lianyi, 1966), no. 148.
- 85 Chang Kuang-pin, *Yuan si dajia*, no. 406 (English) 80–81; (Chinese) 66–67. The author proposes 1364 as a possible date for the scroll.
- 86 Wang Keyu 汪珂玉, *Shanhu wang hua lu* 珊瑚網畫錄 (preface 1643; reprint, ZGSHQS, vol. 5, 1089–94. Whether the scroll has survived is unknown. It is recorded in a number of standard sources, in addition to *Shanhu wang*. About the scroll, see Vinograd, “Wang Meng’s Pien Mountains,” 110, 142; Chu-tsing Li, “The Development of Painting in Soochow During the Yuan Dynasty,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1970), 488, 501, n. 7.
- 87 Colophons for *The Iris and Orchid Hall* are recorded in Wang Keyu, *Shanhu wang*, *juan* 11, 1088–1089. The handscroll in the National Palace Museum, which has a slightly different title, *The Iris and Orchid Chamber* (*Zhilan shi tu* 芝蘭室圖), is recorded in *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈 (1745; reprint, Taipei, Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1971), 1051. For discussion of the latter work, see James Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yuan Dynasty, 1279–1368* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1976), 125–26; Vinograd, “Wang Meng’s Pien Mountains,” 158–62.
- 88 Wang Keyu, *Shanhu wang*, 1088–89. Both Cahill and Vinograd translate long sections of the artist’s essay; Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 125–26; Vinograd, “Wang Meng’s Pien Mountains,” 158–62. The colophon immediately following Laifu’s was written by Wei Su 危素, who died in 1372. One of the other monk writers, Baiyunfeng Rulan 白雲峰如蘭, was possibly the same Rulan who authored one of nine colophons following the *Luohans Crossing the Water* handscroll; *Bidian zhulin* 131–32.
- 89 Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 125; Chang Kuang-pin, *Yuan si dajia*, no. 411 (English) 85–86; (Chinese) 70–71.
- 90 Translated in Vinograd, “Wang Meng’s Pien Mountains,” 126–28.
- 91 Wang Keyu, *Shanhuwang*, 1089; Chang Kuang-pin, *Yuan si dajia*, no. 411; (English) 85–86; (Chinese) 188, 195, 200, 202. Miaosheng also associated with leading scholars such as Yuan Jue 袁桷, Zhang Zhu 張翥 (1287–1368), and Wei Su 危素, as well as with Zongle, Rizhang, and Wang Meng. Miaosheng’s collected writings, which were published posthumously as the *Donggao lu* 東臯錄 by his disciple(s?), include Rizhang’s tomb epitaph. This collection is also rich in poems written for paintings, mostly secular paintings by Yuan and early Ming artists, but also some of Buddhist subjects. Miaosheng, *Donggao lu* in *Siku quanshu zhenben wuji*, vol. 296 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1974), 1–2 et *passim*; *Yuan si dajia*, 165, 195, 200, 202, 204. An inscription by Miaosheng is found on a *Portrait of Su Shi* associated with Qizong 啟宗, another prominent monk of the period; *Chūgoku meiga-shū* 2, comp. Tanaka Hoshirō (Tokyo: Ryūbin Shokuyoku, 1945), no. 4.
- 92 Wang Keyu, *Shanhuwang hua lu*, 1087. (The same poem appears in Zongle’s collected works, where it is dedicated to a Yue Shangren.)
- 93 DMB, 1023.
- 94 *Jingci si zhi* 淨慈寺志, ed. Shi Jixiang, 釋際祥, *juan* 9, 14b–15b, in *Zhongguo fo shi shi zhi hui kan*, part 1, 中國佛寺史志彙刊. 第1輯, vol. 18, 616–18. In 1392 Tong’an ascended to the Great Tianjie Monastery in Nanjing, and the court summoned him as the Left Buddhist Patriarch of the Central Buddhist Registry.
- 95 Wang Keyu, *Shanhuwang*, 1087.
- 96 *Shiqu baoji*, 1007–1009; *Liaoning sheng bowuguan canghua ji* I (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1962), 92, no. 31.
- 97 Vinograd, “Wang Meng’s Pien Mountains,” 375–81.
- 98 Ling-en Lu, “Mountain Taibai (Taibais-han tu) by Wang Meng (1301–1385),” unpublished seminar paper, 1995, University of Kansas.
- 99 Lu, “Mountain Taibai”; *Tiantong si zhi*, ed. Wen Xingdao (Suoquan) 聞性道 (崧泉) Shi Dejie 釋德介, in *Zhongguo fosi shi zhi huikan*, sect. 1 ji, books 13–14 中國佛寺史志彙刊. 第1輯; 第13–14冊 (Taipei: Zong Qing tushu chubanshe, 1994), *juan* 2, 10b–11a; *juan* 3, 42a–b. For his lineage, see *Chan zong shi cheng ji*, 595.
- 100 Translated in Ling-en Lu, “Mountain Taibai,” appendix IV.

- 101 For the colophon on Wang Meng's *Cloudy Forest Retreat*, see Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 *Rangliguan guoyan lu, xulu* 穰黎館過眼錄, 續錄 (Taipei: Xuehai chuban she, 1975) *juan* 3, 1885-86 (23a-b); for the painting by Fanlong, see *Bidian zhulin*, 115-16.
- 102 This was five years after his return from the Western Regions, and just following his return from Anhui, where he was sent after being implicated in the Hu Weiyong case.
- 103 Adapted from Ling-en Lu's translation.
- 104 One of the seals after Shouren's colophon on the *Dīpaṅkara* scroll reads "Mengguan 夢觀"; see also n. 80 above.
- 105 The Liaoning Provincial Museum catalogue suggests that Yao's poem was done by a ghost writer. *Liaoning sheng bowuguan canghua ji*. I, 92.





## SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN YUAN LITERATI ART

*The Case of the Li-Guo Tradition***Abstract**

With the reunification of China under the Mongol Yuan dynasty, southern artists rediscovered the monumental landscape traditions of the Northern Song era (960–1127) as preserved and perpetuated in the north during the intervening 150 years, when that part of China was under the rulership of the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115–1234) and then the Mongols. In particular, the pictorial tradition associated with Li Cheng (919–967) and Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090) enjoyed a major revival in the works of leading southern scholar-painters, most notably Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322). But while the Li-Guo tradition had a profound impact on the subject matter and style of southern painters, these artists also radically transformed their models by favoring calligraphic self-expression over descriptive representation.

WITH THE MONGOL CONQUEST of the Southern Song 南宋 in 1279 and the reunification of China under the Yuan 元 dynasty (1279–1368), southern artists rediscovered the monumental landscape traditions of the Five Dynasties 五代 (907–960) and Northern Song 北宋 (960–1127) eras. In particular, the pictorial tradition associated with Li Cheng 李成 (919–967) and Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1000–ca. 1090) enjoyed a major revival in the works of leading southern scholar-painters beginning with Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) around 1300 and continuing for the next five decades before this style fell out of favor among literati artists.<sup>1</sup> The Li-Guo 李郭 style did continue during the ensuing Ming 明 dynasty (1368–1644), but it was practiced almost exclusively by professional painters associated with the court.<sup>2</sup>

What accounts for the resurgence of the Li-Guo style during the early Yuan? One contributing factor was certainly the reacquaintance of scholar-painters living in the south with northern traditions preserved and perpetuated in the north during the intervening 150 years, when that part of China was under the rule of the Jurchen Jin 金 dynasty (1115–1234) and then the Mongols.<sup>3</sup> Not only did Zhao Mengfu and other southerners travel to the north, but numerous northerners — both Chinese and non-Chinese — were posted in the south, where their patronage and taste had an important influence on painting styles during the early Yuan.<sup>4</sup> An even more important factor may have been that the Li-Guo tradition's powerful images of ancient trees and wintry groves had long been metaphors for integrity, strength, and endurance in the face of adversity.<sup>5</sup> These images took on new immediacy and relevance after the Mongol conquest, when members of the southern Chinese elite were largely excluded from their traditional career of government service through active discrimination and the discontinuation of the civil service examination system.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unidentified artist (late 11th century), formally attributed to Li Cheng (919–967), *Lofly Pines, Level Distance*, hanging scroll, ink on silk, 126.1 x 205.6 cm. Chokaido Museum of Art, Mie. From *Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu* 29 (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1972), pl. 1.

Yet while the Li-Guo tradition had a profound impact on the subject matter and style of painting during the early Yuan, it was also radically transformed by Yuan practitioners. As scholar-artists increasingly favored calligraphic self-expression over descriptive representation, they changed their relationship to the painted image, making it far more personal and autobiographical.<sup>7</sup> As painting increasingly served as an intimate medium of exchange between like-minded individuals, the more public and overtly political functions of the Li-Guo tradition of landscape imagery as an emblem of courtly values were transformed to serve a more personal function that one might identify as metaphorical portraiture.<sup>8</sup> Zhao Mengfu played a pivotal role in shifting the style, meaning, and function of this pictorial tradition.

The Yuan rediscovery of the Li-Guo tradition was part of a broader revival of the painting styles of the Five Dynasties era, a period when the disintegration of the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) and subsequent political instability led artists to seek inspiration from the natural world, finding in mountains and rivers a permanence and place of sanctuary that the human realm increasingly lacked.<sup>9</sup> The landscape images that Yuan painters created were not descriptions of specific sites; rather, they were scholarly evocations of earlier images of reclusion and wilderness sanctuaries. For tenth-century artists and their later followers, majestic trees rivaled panoramic landscapes as sources of artistic inspiration and were viewed as embodiments of human values. The hermit-painter Jing Hao 荆浩 (c. 855–915) saw in the pine tree “the moral character of the virtuous man”<sup>10</sup> while the preeminent landscape master Li Cheng (919–967) is said to have painted desolate scenes of winter because men of virtue were only to be found in the wilderness.<sup>11</sup>

Li Cheng is the likely originator of one of the most durable compositional types in Chinese art: old trees and rocks set against a level distance panorama.<sup>12</sup> The large hanging scroll *Lofty Pine, Level Distance* exemplifies this new form (fig. 1).<sup>13</sup> The majestic pine, growing from a rocky outcrop and silhouetted against a receding plain, extends its boughs protectively over a smaller, leafless tree, powerfully conveying a sense of dignified and defiant survival in a harsh and desolate world. Our ability to read into this image a reference to human values is validated by the words of Jing Hao:

When a tree grows, it does so according to its received nature. A pine tree in growing may curve but will never become crooked or perverse.... From the time it is a sapling onward it is naturally upright, its developing heart will not bend/bow. Its disposition is thus solitary [independent] and tall [noble].<sup>14</sup>

*Travelers in a Wintry Forest* (fig. 2), a second early Song painting that may preserve a composition that originated with Li Cheng, also recalls an account by Jing Hao



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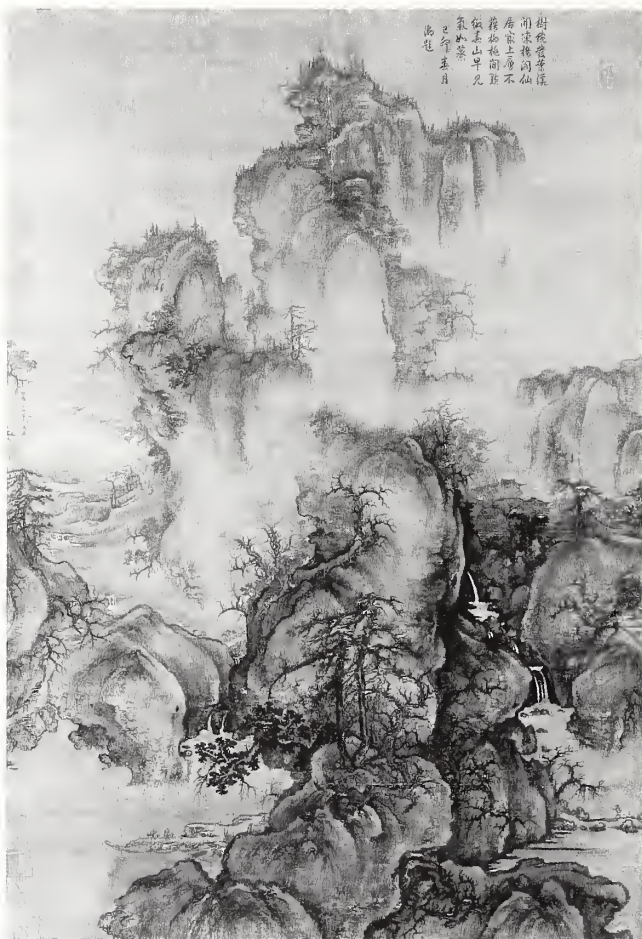
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Unidentified artist (early 12th century), after Li Cheng (919–967), *Travelers in a Wintry Forest*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 161.6 x 100 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Fletcher Fund and Bequest of Dorothy Graham Bennett, 1972 (1972.121).

in which he describes a “gigantic pine tree, its aged bark overgrown with lichen, its winged scales seeming to ride in the air. Its stature is like that of a coiling dragon trying to reach the Milky Way.”<sup>15</sup> The painting presents a microcosm of the natural cycle of growth and decay with the great pine tree symbolizing the virtuous gentleman, surrounded by trees that range from youthful saplings through maturity to a shattered ancient hulk.<sup>16</sup> The stoic silence of the wintry forest is matched by the unyielding spirit of the scholar on his donkey, the noble recluse who has entered the mountains in order to rediscover in nature the moral order lost in the human world. Peter Sturman has convincingly argued that the donkey rider is the Tang poet Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689–740), whom, Martin Powers notes, constructed for himself the persona of a talented but unrecognized loner, traveling through the wilderness in search of inspiration.<sup>17</sup>

Deng Chun 鄧椿 (active 1127–67), in his *Hua ji* 畫繼 (Painting, continued), clearly recognized the connection between the noble pine and the unyielding spirit of the lofty scholar who withdrew into the political wilderness in order to maintain his integrity:

As for the wintry forests [Li Cheng] composed, many are among the cliffs and caves, cut off [from corruption] and completely open; they allude to gentlemen living in the wilderness [which is to say, recluses]. As for the other plants, their entire lives are passed on the level ground; they allude to petty men who hold official positions. His ideas were subtle.<sup>18</sup>





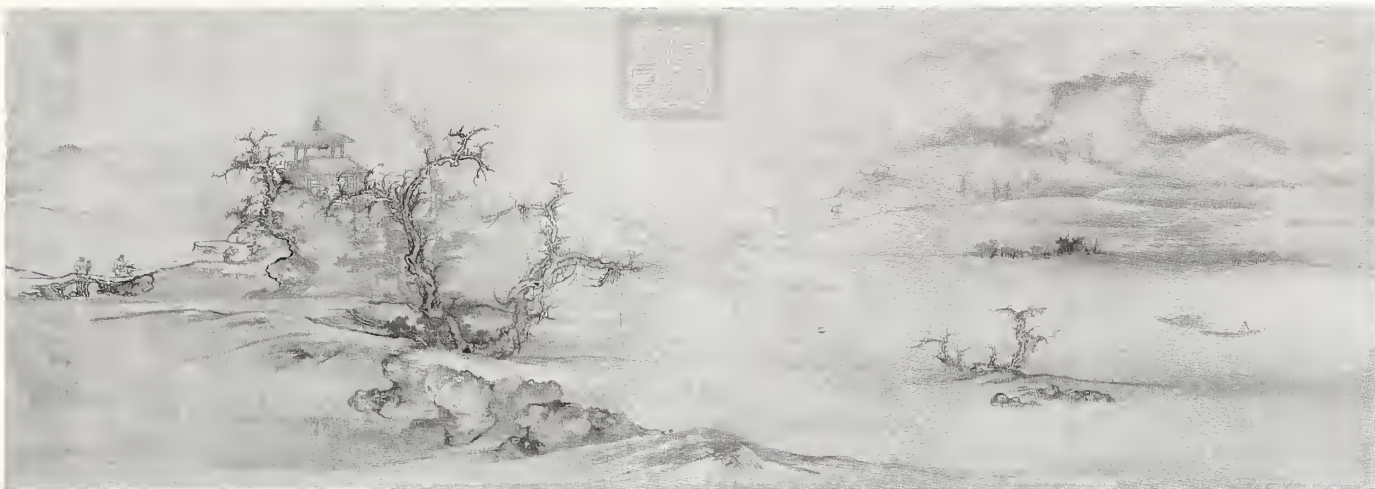
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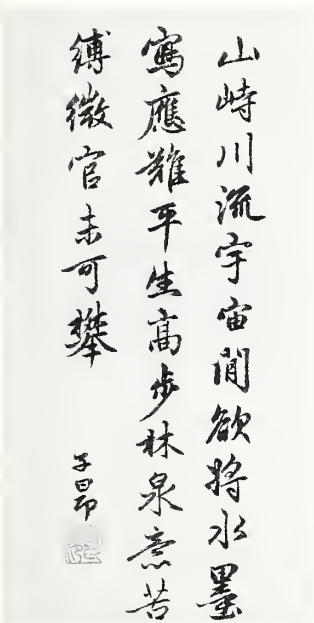
Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090), *Early Spring*, 1072, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 158.3 x 108.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt et al., *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), pl. 60.

At just the time that Deng Chun was writing his interpretation of Li Cheng's imagery, Li Cheng's greatest follower, Guo Xi was introducing, in Powers' words, "a new ideological spin" on this landscape imagery.<sup>19</sup> With the patronage of the Song emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1068–85), Guo Xi effectively co-opted the image of the defiant recluse and reinterpreted it as the high-minded government official. This new imagery is explicitly defined in Guo Xi's essay *Lin quan gao zhi* (Lofty ambitions in forests and streams):

A great mountain is grand like a lord over all the other mountains. [These] should be arranged hierarchically, such that flat ridges and mounts, woods and gullies [will be placed] near or far, large or small [in relation to] this grand lord. Its significant figure should be like that of a great lord, dignified and facing south [like an emperor], with all the nobility hastening to his court, yet without [any trace of] haughty or capricious disposition. Tall pines stand apart [from the crowd], a model for all the other trees. They should be arranged hierarchically, such that the vines and creepers, plants and trees will rise up or be supported, will learn from or depend upon this leader and teacher. Its disposition should be like that of a Confucian gentleman, noble of character, in the prime of his career, a [man] whom all the lesser men serve [yet] without [any trace of] a privileged or overbearing attitude.<sup>20</sup>



4



4A

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Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090), *Old Trees, Level Distance*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 35.9 x 104.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, John M. Crawford, Jr., Collection, Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr., in honor of Douglas Dillon, 1981 (1981.276).

4A  
Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), colophon attached to Guo Xi, *Old Trees, Level Distance*, fig. 4.

Guo Xi's reinterpretation of the scholar-recluse imagery in order to magnify the grandeur of the state coincides with a major shift in court-sponsored decor under Emperor Shenzong, who favored landscapes, bamboo, and bird-and-flower paintings over brightly colored, decorative subjects long associated with aristocratic display—figures, palatial architecture, and narratives.<sup>21</sup> Shou-chien Shih has observed that Guo Xi, painting for Emperor Shenzong, intended his masterpiece *Early Spring* (fig. 3), dated 1072, to symbolize the revitalization of the empire under that emperor's rule.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Guo Xi's many murals for the palace, including those in Shenzong's 1083 reconstruction of the Jade Hall (Yu Tang 玉堂), the main hall of the Northern Song Institute of Academicians (Hanlin Xueshi Yuan 翰林學士院), were clearly intended as a metaphor of a prosperous and well-ordered state.<sup>23</sup> In Shih's view, the moral virtues embedded in the Li-Guo idiom became identified with the state and with loyal service. Thus, depictions of tall mountains or flourishing trees might be laudatory commemorations of a virtuous ruler or his officials.<sup>24</sup>

But *Old Trees, Level Distance* (fig. 4), a late work by Guo Xi, reveals the malleability of this imagery. Ping Foong has shown that this intimate handscroll, in contrast to Guo Xi's large-format public works, was considered a new and original kind of painting even by Guo Xi's contemporaries, including Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105).<sup>25</sup> Painted in the 1080s when Guo Xi was more than eighty-years-old, Foong has demonstrated that the scroll was made as a parting gift for a fellow government official on the eve of his retirement and departure from the capital. The painting depicts two elderly gentlemen making their way toward a pavilion for a farewell meal. While the autumnal landscape evokes the sadness and finality of this parting, the two craggy foreground trees, echoing the bent forms of the men, are connected at the root, offering a potent metaphor for the men's enduring bond of friendship.

Around the time that the monumental landscape style was co-opted by the court, prominent members of the Song educated elite, including Su Shi, Huang Tingjian, and Mi Fu 米芾 (1052–1107), began to criticize its richly descriptive representational style. In Su Shi's famous comment: "Anyone who judges a painting on the basis of form-likeness [i.e. similitude or resemblance to the depicted object] shows merely the insight of a child."<sup>26</sup> Powers has characterized this radical departure

from illusionistic norms as naturalism versus naturalness: “If similitude — naturalism — was the logical precondition for the old theory of metaphoric expression, then naturalness was the underlying value in literati theories.”<sup>27</sup> Naturalness for these scholars implied a lack of artifice and an unlabored, playful approach to creation that shifted the focus away from the subject and onto the artist. This shift in focus became a critical concern for Yuan scholar-painters.

The Li-Guo style suffered a further setback at the court of Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (1082–1135, r. 1100–25), who is reported to have removed Guo Xi’s paintings from the palace, preferring instead, archaistic evocations of Tang styles exemplified by the works of Wang Ximeng 王希孟 (1096–1119) and Li Tang 李唐 (ca. 1070s–ca. 1150s).<sup>28</sup> With the withdrawal of imperial patronage, the Li-Guo idiom largely vanished from Song court-sponsored painting after the court moved south to Hangzhou 杭州, even though the lyrical, emotion-laden imagery and intimate scale seen in Guo Xi’s short handscroll became an integral part of Southern Song court art.

The Jin occupation of northern China following the sack of the Song capital of Kaifeng in 1127 and the eventual relocation of the Song court to Hangzhou led to a further bifurcation in painting styles. In Jurchen-occupied northern China, where there was no imperial sponsorship of a formal painting academy, scholar-artists perpetuated the literati styles begun by Su Shi, Wen Tong 文同 (1019–1079), Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1041–1106), and Mi Fu, while the Li-Guo idiom remained a popular tradition among artists of all classes.<sup>29</sup> In the territories controlled by the so-called Southern Song (1127–1279), on the other hand, the Li-Guo tradition seems to have rapidly lost favor.<sup>30</sup> In its place, court and literati artists alike favored archaistic painting styles, particularly the antique blue-green landscape tradition as revived by artists active at Huizong’s court.<sup>31</sup>

At the end of the thirteenth century, Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), a scion of the Song royal house growing up in Wuxing, and his older contemporary and fellow townsman Qian Xuan 錢選 (ca. 1235–before 1307), continued to work in versions of the archaistic blue-green landscape style.<sup>32</sup> In Zhao Mengfu’s *Mind Landscape of Xie Youyu*, ca. 1286, for example, the compartmentalized composition, defined by stylized, frontally arrayed trees and mountains, is a learned evocation of pre-Tang landscape models.<sup>33</sup> Shortly after this painting was completed, Zhao Mengfu took the dramatic step of accepting an invitation to serve in the government of Khubilai Khagan (Emperor Shizu 世祖, r. 1260–94).

It is only after Zhao Mengfu’s return to Wuxing in 1295, following nearly ten years of government service in the north, that we see him introducing a new repertoire of stylistic allusions in his art — pictorial traditions that had long lain dormant among southern artists.<sup>34</sup> In early 1296, Zhao Mengfu painted *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* for his friend Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298). Accord-





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Zhao Mengfu, *River Village: Fisherman's Joy*, ca. 1295–99, fan painting mounted as an album leaf, ink and color on silk, 28.6 x 30 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Fund, 1978.66.

ing to Zhao Mengfu's inscription, the painting depicts two mountains from Zhou Mi's ancestral homeland, but the style of the painting is not in the least descriptive. Instead, Zhao Mengfu combined a version of the archaic blue-green color scheme with the brush idiom of the southern master Dong Yuan 董元 (ca. 930s–960s), linking, thereby, Zhou Mi's northern lineage with the cultural heritage of the southern literati elite.<sup>35</sup>

Around the same time, in the late 1290s, we see the earliest example of Zhao Mengfu's experimentation with the Li-Guo idiom in his *River Village-Fisherman's Joy* (fig. 5).<sup>36</sup> As in *Autumn Colors*, Zhao Mengfu mediates his revival of the earlier style with a persistent use of an eclectic archaism. Working in the intimate oval fan format, Zhao Mengfu creates a level distance recession with prominent foreground pines, leafless trees, and eroded embankments—all typical Li-Guo motifs. Zhao Mengfu, however, awkwardly combines these elements with schematic blue-green rocks and mountains as well as naïve figures and architectural elements similar to those seen in *Autumn Colors*.

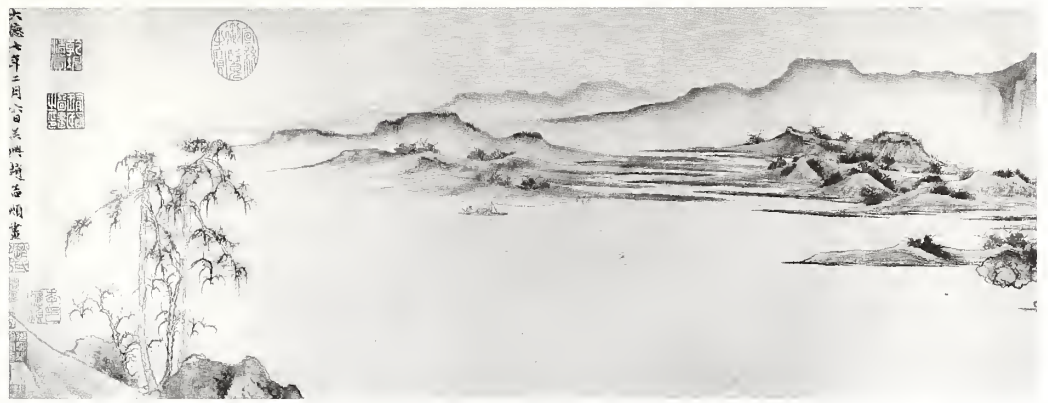
This self-consciously archaistic manner came to an end in 1299 when Zhao Mengfu left retirement to accept an appointment to the Academy of Scholarly Worthies (*Jixianyuan* 集賢院) and the directorship of Confucian schools for the Jiang-Zhe 江浙Circuit (present day Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces) in the city of Hangzhou. The former Southern Song capital had remained a cultural center after its fall to Mongol forces in 1276 and Zhao Mengfu had participated in the city's literary circles during the 1280s and 1290s on those occasions when he was able to take informal leaves from his service in the north.<sup>37</sup> But his participation increased significantly after his return south in 1295 and especially after his appointment to a post in Hangzhou in 1299. In Hangzhou, Zhao Mengfu came into contact with a great many works of art that had hitherto been inaccessible. Here, too, he befriended a number of important northern scholar-officials, including Li Kan 李衍 (1245–1320), Gao Kegong 高克恭 (1248–1310), and Xianyu Shu 鮮于樞 (1257?–1302), all of whom had a profound effect on his approach to painting.<sup>38</sup> In 1300, for example,

he followed Xianyu Shu in a viewing of *Secluded Bamboo among Withered Branches*, a major work by the Jin scholar-artist Wang Tingyun 王庭筠 (1156–1202). Xianyu Shu's colophon to this scroll forcefully articulates the expressive equivalence of painting and calligraphy — a concept that was to have a profound impact on Zhao Mengfu's later art:

I have often thought that the ancients who excelled in calligraphy ought to excel in painting, too. *That is because calligraphy and painting possess the same basic principles* [emphasis mine]. There has seldom been a case when someone who could do one could not do the other. Few can become famous for both, however, because the superior achievement invariably overshadows the less superior one.... Only with Mi Yuanzhang 米元章 [Mi Fu 米芾 1052–1107] were calligraphy and painting so excellent that both became equally famous today. After Mi Yuanzhang, there was only one person like that — Mr. Huanghua 黃華 [Wang Tingyun].... If you study this scroll carefully, you will see that *there is painting in the calligraphy and calligraphy in the painting* [emphasis mine]. It is resplendent with a natural truth and overflows with a primal spirit.<sup>39</sup>

Since Zhao Mengfu inscribed the painting directly after Xianyu Shu's colophon, he clearly was aware of Xianyu Shu's ideas. Curiously, his own colophon offers no such commentary on the interrelationship of the two arts: "Whenever I see the painting and calligraphy of Huanghua, it makes my spirit feel truly refreshed. This scroll is especially outstanding in its perfection."<sup>40</sup>

Judging from Zhao Mengfu's paintings prior to this date, it seems clear that Northern Song traditions of scholar art — as exemplified by Wang Tingyun's painting — had not been an important influence before his encounter with these northerners and their scholar-painting aesthetic. But Zhao Mengfu's subsequent paintings show a radical departure from his earlier decorative blue-green palette. In *Water Village* of 1302 and *Layered Rivers and Tiered Peaks* of 1303 (fig. 6), Zhao Mengfu left behind the eclectic melding of the Dong Yuan and Li-Guo idioms with a blue-green color scheme for a more distilled evocation of these styles in a purely monochrome palette.<sup>41</sup> In the case of *Layered Rivers and Tiered Peaks* (*Chongjiang diezhang* 重江疊嶂), Zhao Mengfu appears to have been inspired by a similarly titled composition, *Misty River and Tiered Peaks* (*Yanjiang diezhang* 煙江疊嶂) by Wang Shen 王詵 (ca. 1048–1103) that Zhao Mengfu first saw in the capital in 1292.<sup>42</sup> Although Zhao Mengfu's terse inscription on *Layered Rivers* gives no hint at its significance, Shane McCausland has argued that in spite of his official position in Hangzhou, Zhao Mengfu's removal from the center of political power led him to adopt an imagery of



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Zhao Mengfu, *Layered Rivers and Tiered Peaks*, 1303, handscroll, ink on paper, 28.4 x 176.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Possessing the Past*, pl. 141.

exile and that this landscape, inspired by a work painted by a scion of the Song royal family shortly after his return from banishment, may correspond closely to Zhao Mengfu's state of mind occupying a post remote from the center of political power.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, as a member of Su Shi's circle, Zhao Mengfu may have felt that Wang Shen was a particularly appropriate model to follow.

McCausland has shown that the next phase in Zhao Mengfu's artistic evolution corresponds to his return to Dadu in 1310 at the summons of Yuan emperor Wuzong (Khaishan, r. 1308–11). According to McCausland, a key event in Zhao Mengfu's understanding of the Li-Guo style occurred shortly after his arrival in the capital when he viewed Guo Xi's *Old Trees, Level Distance* (fig. 4), the kind of intimate handscroll painting that had been greatly admired by such prominent literati as Su Shi and Huang Tingjian.<sup>44</sup> Zhao Mengfu's colophon reveals his own admiration for this work:

Tall mountains and flowing rivers fill the world,  
Aspiring to draw them with water and ink is difficult.  
My whole life I have followed [Guo Xi's] lofty message of forests and streams;  
Constrained by petty official duties, I have been unable to achieve it.

Zhao Mengfu's colophon follows that of Feng Zizhen 馮子振 (1257–after 1327), the favorite connoisseur of Princess Sengge 祥哥利吉 (ca. 1283–1331).<sup>45</sup> McCausland has reasoned that Feng's precedence over Zhao in the order of colophons reflects Zhao Mengfu's marginalized position under Wuzong and helps confirm the dating of Zhao Mengfu's comment to late 1310.<sup>46</sup>





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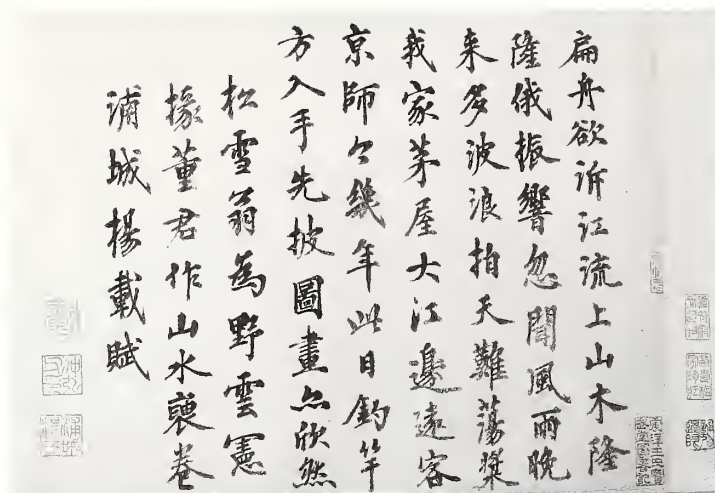
Zhao Mengfu, *Twin Pines, Level Distance*, ca. 1310, handscroll, ink on paper, 26.9 x 107.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.5).

Zhao Mengfu's diminished influence at court prior to the succession of Prince Ayurbarwada to throne in 1311 as Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1312–20) may also explain his use of a “level distance” composition—a motif associated with exile or being out of political favor—in his *Twin Pines, Level Distance* (fig. 7), which he must have painted shortly after viewing the Guo Xi.<sup>47</sup>

*Twin Pines*, closely based on Guo Xi's composition, represents a new distillation of the Li-Guo idiom, minimizing narrative content and the descriptive use of ink wash to create a new landscape paradigm that exemplifies Xianyu Shu's assertion that “there is painting in calligraphy and calligraphy in painting.” The importance of calligraphy is asserted by Zhao Mengfu's prominent inscriptions, which bracket the composition and condition our reading of the pictorial content. The first inscription, “[Zhao] Zi'ang playfully made this ‘Twin Pines Level Distance,’” is placed immediately to the right of the rock and pines, strongly implying an autographic and autobiographic link between the imagery and the artist. Zhao Mengfu's reference to “playfully making” his painting pointedly invokes the ideals of the Northern Song scholar-amateurs for whom “ink plays” were primarily about self-expression.<sup>48</sup>

The painting, a mirror image of Guo Xi's composition, recycles many of Guo Xi's motifs—the diagonal recession, layered distant mountains, and a fisherman in a boat—but now forefronts the paired trees, which, in place of Guo Xi's bent, twisted leafless species, are now flourishing upright pines. More significantly, Zhao Mengfu has eliminated the emotion-laden atmospheric and narrative details of the earlier work. Ink wash has been purged, content has been pared to a minimum, and the only human presence is the small figure of a fisherman in the distance. Zhao Mengfu has distilled Guo Xi's imagery. His spare, emphatically linear rocks and trees deemphasize the painting's representational function and highlight the artist's hand. Guo's landscape idiom has become a calligraphic style. Rather than describing nature as it appears to be, Zhao Mengfu has sought to capture its quintessential rhythms. The characteristics of rocks and trees, felt by the artist and acted out through his calligraphic brushwork, are imbued with a heightened sense of life-energy that goes beyond mere representation.<sup>49</sup>

The painting ends with a long autobiographical statement in which Zhao Mengfu asserts that his own art is different from that of the old masters. By writing directly on top of the distant mountains, Zhao Mengfu again emphasizes his rejection of illusionistic goals. The viewer is forced to see the painting as a personal statement. He writes:



7A

7A

Yang Zai (1271–1323), colophon,  
attached to Zhao Mengfu, *Twin Pines*,  
*Level Distance*, fig. 7.

Besides studying calligraphy, I have since my youth dabbled in painting. Landscape I have always found difficult. This is because ancient [landscape] masterpieces of the Tang, such as the works of Wang Wei 王維, the great and the small Li [Li Sixun 李思訓 and Li Zhaodao 李昭道], and Zheng Qian 鄭虔, no longer survive. As for the Five Dynasties masters, Jing [Hao], Guan [Tong] 關仝, Dong [Yuan], and Fan [Kuan] 范寬, all of whom succeeded one another, their brushwork is totally different from that of the more recent painters. What I paint may not rank with the work of the ancient masters, but compared to recent paintings, I dare say mine are quite different.<sup>50</sup>

*Twin Pines, Level Distance* marks Zhao Mengfu's confident embrace of the Northern Song literati approach to painting in which painting and calligraphy are seen as equivalent. Although his long inscription stresses his interest in antique styles, he disingenuously fails to mention the true sources of his inspiration: Guo Xi and the scholar-amateur tradition. Ping Foong has shown that Guo Xi's short handscrolls were greatly admired by a number of prominent Northern Song literati including Su Shi.<sup>51</sup> This endorsement of Guo Xi's intimate painting style must have been an important factor in Zhao Mengfu's appreciation for this painting. The validation of Guo Xi's intimate landscapes by Song scholar-amateurs also provided Zhao Mengfu with a rationale for transforming Guo Xi's representational mode into a new scholar-amateur idiom of his own creation.

Zhao Mengfu's use of calligraphic brushwork for painting is explicitly articulated in his colophon to *Elegant Rock and Tree*, another short handscroll from the early 1310s that depicts a rock and old tree composition in a manner reminiscent of Su Shi:

Rocks like flying white [cursive script], trees like seal script  
To "write" bamboo, go back to the *ba[fen]*, i.e., [clerical script] method.  
Only when a person is capable of understanding this  
Will he know that painting and calligraphy are basically the same.<sup>52</sup>

But *Twin Pines, Level Distance* is more than a calligraphic exercise or a work of art historical scholarship. A colophon (fig. 7a) added by Zhao Mengfu's close friend

Yang Zai 楊載 (1271–1323) offers a surprising commentary to Zhao Mengfu's image and suggests that the painting conceals deep, personal meaning:

As the tiny boat tries to advance up river,  
Mighty mountain trees are suddenly swept into tumult.  
Swiftly heavy wind and rain pour through the night,  
Clapping waves against the sky — making the oars hard to control!<sup>53</sup>  
My native home is a hut beside the great river, but for many years now I have  
lived away in the capital. Today it is as if a fishing pole had come into my  
hands, as I enjoy perusing this painting.

Because there is little in Zhao Mengfu's painting to justify Yang Zai's vivid description of a storm-wracked landscape, we must conclude that Yang Zai was not describing the actual painting but was alluding to Zhao Mengfu's tumultuous political career in which he had to face both the dangerous intrigues of the Mongol court and the censure of Chinese who felt that his service under two dynasties was immoral.<sup>54</sup>

Zhao Mengfu's painting of twin pines isolated against a vast riverscape may well have been intended as a self-reflective image that conveyed the difficulty of his decision and his stubborn sense of integrity and determination in the face of challenges that Yang Zai explicitly describes. Zhao Mengfu was forced to return to the capital under less than ideal circumstances. As a result, his painting may well have been intended to express his sense of isolation and his inability to pursue the tranquil life of a fisherman-recluse who, in Zhao Mengfu's painting, is far removed from the pines. As Zhao Mengfu makes clear in his colophon to Guo Xi's *Old Trees, Level Distance*, he felt that his whole life had been devoted to following "the lofty message of forests and steams," as expressed in Guo Xi's famous text, "Lofty Ambitions in Forests and Streams" (*Lin quan gao zhi* 林泉高志), but that he had never been able to achieve that goal because of his "petty official duties."

Zhao Mengfu's admiration for Guo Xi's landscape style and his adoption of the Li-Guo idiom in his own art undoubtedly influenced the revival of this style among southern Chinese artists. During the early years of the Yuan dynasty, the image of trees set in a desolate landscape had an enormous appeal for the generation of scholars who, disenfranchised by Mongol rule and the suspension of civil service examinations, sought to communicate their solidarity through art.

*Crows in Old Trees* (fig. 8) by Luo Zhichuan 羅稚川 (ca. 1265–ca. 1340), a scholar-artist from Linchuan 臨川 (in present day Jiangxi Province), exemplifies this poignant use of the Li-Guo mode by painters living in the south. As Charles Hartman has shown in his meticulous study of this painting, the two male pheasants with





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Luo Zhichuan (ca. 1265–ca. 1340), *Crows in Old Trees*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 131.5 x 80 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Purchase, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, by exchange, 1973 (1973.121.6).

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Li Kan (1245–1320), *Twin Pines*, hanging scroll, ink on silk, 156.7 x 91.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Gugong shuhua tu lu* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1989–), 4, pl. 1.

their colorful plumage are emblematic of multitalented scholars. Here, they hunker down in the snow beside the two naked trees — a bleak image of survival — while the restless, circling crows recall Deng Chun's petty men. The painting, executed in ink and color on silk, follows the conservative, naturalistic tradition of Song prototypes but exhibits a new intensity and starkness that reflects intense emotions lying just beneath the surface.

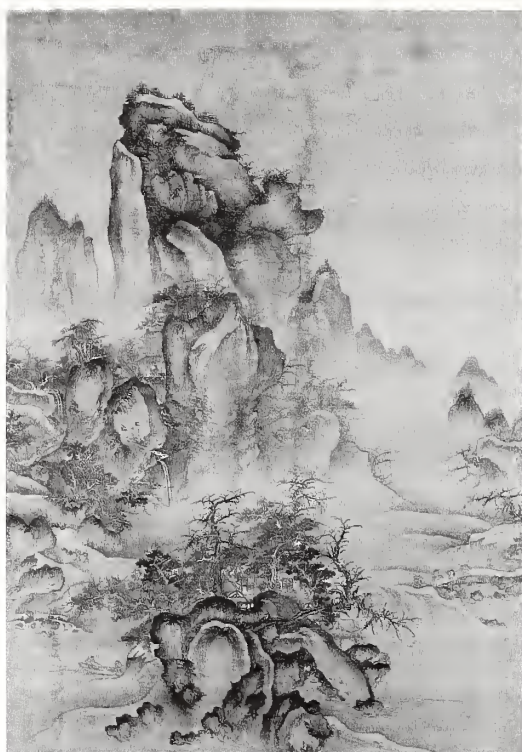
As Luo Zhichuan's painting demonstrates, during the early decades of the fourteenth century, southern artists did not immediately embrace Zhao Mengfu's calligraphic distillation of the Li-Guo style. Instead, most painters practiced a far more descriptive version of this idiom such as that favored by Li Kan 李衍 (1245–1320), a northern scholar-artist who for many years served as an official in Jiang-Zhe Circuit (present day Jiangsu and Zhejiang).<sup>55</sup> Li Kan's *Twin Pines* (fig. 9) is an imposing hanging scroll that reflects the continued vitality of the Li-Guo tradition in north China. Like Li Kan's meticulous description of the pines' rugged trunks and branches, knotholes, bark, and clusters of needles reflect the naturalistic manner of Song and Jin prototypes and recall his similarly detailed renderings of bamboo.<sup>56</sup>

Cao Zhibo 曹知白 (1272–1355), a talented scholar who traveled to the capital and briefly held a government position before retiring to his estate in Huating 華亭 (modern Songjiang 松江, Jiangsu Province) may have adopted the Li-Guo idiom as a means of influencing high-ranking, northern officials.<sup>57</sup> His *Twin Pines* of 1329 (fig. 10), a meticulous, fairly literal version of the classic Li-Guo composition, is dedicated to the Khitan aristocrat Shimo Jizi 石抹繼祖 (1281–ca. 1347) “as an embodiment of our mutual friendship.”<sup>58</sup> The painting, with its clearly delineated receding ground plane, rich sense of atmosphere, and complex array of carefully



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10  
Cao Zhibo (1272–1355), *Twin Pines*, 1329, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 132.1 x 57.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Gugong shuhua tu lu*, 4, pl. 121.



11

11  
Tang Di (ca. 1287–1355), *Travelers in the Autumn Mountains, After Guo Xi*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 151.9 x 103.7 cm., National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Possessing the Past*, pl. 146.



12

12  
Tang Di, *Painting After Wang Wei's Poem*, 1323, hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 128.9 x 69.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Ernest Erickson Foundation, 1985 (1985.214.147).

described small and large trees, bears little resemblance to the calligraphic manner of Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines* of two decades earlier; rather, it closely resembles Li Kan's composition of the same title.

The Wuxing native Tang Di 唐棣 (ca. 1287–1355), who followed Zhao Mengfu's example and traveled to the Yuan capital in 1310, also created fairly literal interpretations of the Li-Guo style.<sup>59</sup> Tang Di was a talented poet and scholar, but after submitting a screen painting to Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1312–20) for the Jiayi Palace 嘉熙殿, the emperor appointed him to the position of painter-in-attendance at the Academy of Scholarly Worthies.<sup>60</sup> Tang's *Autumn Mountains after Guo Xi* (fig. 11), which depicts a majestic mountain presiding over a vast landscape, presumably dates to this period and, like its model, Guo Xi's *Early Spring* (fig. 3), must have been intended to please his royal sponsor. The main difference between Tang Di's works and those of Guo Xi is the new level of abstraction, schematization, and conventionalization in the rendering of forms—all of which reflect the influence of Zhao Mengfu. With the diminished patronage of the arts under Renzong's successor Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1321–23), Tang Di withdrew from court service and created bleaker, more introspective images such as his *Painting After Wang Wei's Poem* of 1323 (fig. 12). This brooding landscape, which juxtaposes a contemplative scholar beneath a grove of towering pines and leafless deciduous trees in the foreground with a broad, level vista in the distance, returns the focus to the individual.<sup>61</sup> Clearly there was a different set of associations reserved for isolated old trees that was distinct from the imagery of mountain landscapes that celebrate the ruler and his officials as upholders of a cosmic order.

While artists such as Cao Zhibo and Tang Di perpetuated more literal interpretations of the Li-Guo idiom, other southern artists in the generation following Zhao Mengfu were clearly influenced by Li-Guo compositions and motifs, but





13

13  
Wu Zhen (1280–1354), *Twin Junipers*, 1328, hanging scroll, ink on silk, 180.1 x 111.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Gugong shuhua tu lu*, 4, pl. 161.



14

14  
Wu Zhen, *Fisherman-Recluse on Lake Dongting*, 1341, hanging scroll, ink on silk, 146.4 x 58.6 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Possessing the Past*, pl. 153.



15

15  
Ni Zan (1306–1374), *Enjoying the Wilderness in an Autumn Grove*, 1339, hanging scroll; ink on paper, 97 x 68.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of John M. Crawford Jr., 1988 (1989.363.38).

re-envisioned them using brushwork conventions derived from Dong Yuan 董元 (active 930s–960s) and Juran 巨然 (active ca. 960–985).

*Twin Junipers* (fig. 13), a large hanging scroll executed in 1328 by the scholar-recluse Wu Zhen 吳鎮 (1280–1354), presents a classic Li-Guo image of towering foreground trees set against a meticulously described illusionistic recession.<sup>62</sup> But the landscape details are now suggested using calligraphic “hemp-fiber” texture strokes and dark moss-dot accents that derive from the Dong-Ju landscape tradition. A dozen years later, in *Fisherman-Recluse on Lake Dongting* (fig. 14) of 1341, Wu Zhen completely assimilated the Li-Guo motifs within a new compositional and calligraphic formula. Landscape details are radically simplified, the ground plane is sharply tilted, the brushwork is much more assertive, and Wu Zhen’s bold cursive-script poem is an integral part of the composition. Wu Zhen here makes use of all the same motifs found in Zhao Mengfu’s *Twin Pines, Level Distance* but he has totally reconceived them in a work that manifests his own highly personal style.

Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1306–1374) is another southern artist whose early works reflect the influence of Li-Guo imagery, but who ultimately transforms those influences into a more personal calligraphic expression.<sup>63</sup> Ni Zan’s earliest extant painting, *Enjoying the Wilderness in an Autumn Grove* (fig. 15) of 1339, recalls Tang Di’s *Painting After Wang Wei’s Poem* (fig. 12) of 1323 with its similar composition and narrative content—a gentleman and his servant nestled within a foreground grove of trees that sits atop a rocky outcrop and is set against a level-distance vista. The main differences are Ni Zan’s addition of a thatched pavilion; the lower angle of Ni Zan’s ground plane; and his use of soft, earthen forms described in the characteristic Dong-Ju manner. The painting, probably a self-portrait of the artist in his Pure and Secluded Pavilion (Qingbige 清閤閣), is echoed by a screen painting depicted





16

16

Anonymous, *Portrait of Ni Zan*, ca. 1340, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 28.2 x 60.9 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Possessing the Past*, pl. 155.

in the anonymous *Portrait of Ni Zan* (fig. 16), created around 1340, which is almost a mirror image of Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines, Level Distance* composition. In *The Six Gentlemen* (fig. 17) of 1345, Ni Zan has transformed the Li-Guo level distance compositional formula in a manner similar to that of Wu Zhen's *Fisherman-Recluse on Lake Dongting* (fig. 14) of four years earlier. In contrast to Ni Zan's level distance composition of 1339 (fig. 15), the foreground grove and distant mountains here are viewed from a high vantage point so that a stark expanse of blank paper now separates the two elements. The result is a new emphasis on the flat surface of the picture plane and gridlike juxtaposition of horizontal ground lines and vertical trees. Consequently, Ni Zan's brushwork takes on an importance equal to that of the pictorial motifs.<sup>64</sup>

The stylistic shift seen in the works of Wu Zhen and Ni Zan is indicative of a broader change in pictorial styles. This may be explained, in part, by political and social changes. By the 1340s, the Yuan dynasty was descending into social anarchy. Centralized control was increasingly undermined by factionalism, succession struggles at court, and fragmented local authority, while a series of natural disasters led to the imposition of heavy taxes on the wealthy landowners of the lower Yangzi Delta region. As court patronage of the arts vanished and northern cultural values became less influential, the Li-Guo idiom was subjected to a new literati aesthetic that favored sparer, calligraphic interpretations of earlier styles in the manner of Zhao Mengfu. In particular, the naturalistic, descriptive manner of the Li-Guo tradition with its rich ink washes, complex texturing, and meticulously described forms was replaced by the simpler, more abstract brush idioms associated with Dong Yuan and Juran.

This phenomenon is borne out by a handscroll that preserves paintings by Wang Yuan 王淵 (ca. 1280–after 1349) and Zhu Derun 朱德潤 (1294–1365), two artists whose early careers were characterized by works executed in the conservative representational manner of the Northern Song era, but who were able to adapt their styles to the changing tastes of times and their patrons. Wang Yuan, who studied painting in his youth with Zhao Mengfu, is best known for his bird-and-flower compositions in the archaic manner of Huang Quan (ca. 905–965).<sup>65</sup> But he also created landscapes in the Li-Guo idiom such as *Meeting Friends at the Pine Pavilion* of 1347 (fig. 18). This painting, which recalls Ni Zan's portrayal of his *Pure and Secluded Pavilion* (fig. 15), is a conservative version of a newly emerging



17

17  
Ni Zan, *The Six Gentlemen*, 1345,  
hanging scroll, ink on paper, 61.9  
x 33.3 cm. The Shanghai Museum.  
From *Zhongguo meishu quanji*:  
*Huihua bian* 5 (Beijing, 1989), pl. 116.



18

18  
Wang Yuan (ca. 1280–after 1349),  
*Meeting Friends at the Pine Pavilion*,  
dated 1347, hanging scroll, ink on  
silk, 86.9 x 49.3 cm. National Palace  
Museum, Taipei. From *Gugong*  
*shuhua tu lu*, 4, pl. 239



19

19  
Zhu Derun (1294–1365), *Playing the*  
*Qin beneath the Trees*, hanging scroll,  
ink on silk, 120.8 x 58 cm. National  
Palace Museum, Taipei. From *Gugong*  
*shuhua tu lu*, 4, pl. 217

theme — the scholar's retreat, where friends might meet and find at least a temporary sanctuary from the turmoil of the times. Zhu Derun, a native of Kunshan 昆山 (Jiangsu Province) served as an official in Dadu between 1319 to 1323 before retiring to Suzhou. Most of his extant works are done in a conservative Li-Guo manner exemplified by his *Listening to a Qin beneath the Trees* (fig. 19), which recalls similar compositions by Tang Di.<sup>66</sup>

Around 1340, both of these artists contributed images of the Liangchang 良常 [Constant Virtue] Thatched Hall, the Jingxi 荆谿 (present day Yixing 宜兴, Jiangsu Province) residence of Zhang Jing 張經 (Zhang Dechang 張德常, ca. 1310–after 1375).<sup>67</sup> The two paintings (figs. 20, 21) are now mounted together with frontispieces by Zhao Yong 趙雍 (1289–after 1360) and Wu Fusun 吳幅孫 (active 14th century) and a number of colophons by such cultural luminaries as Ke Jiushi 柯九思 (1290–1343) — whose death date provides a terminus ad quem for the paintings — Ni Zan, Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 (1292–1364), and Wang Meng 王蒙 (ca. 1308–1385).<sup>68</sup> The handscroll testifies to Zhang Jing's status as a highly influential official. But just as clearly, Wang Yuan and Zhu Derun's paintings demonstrate the ability of these conservative artists to adapt themselves to the changing tastes of the time. Wang Yuan's depiction of the studio (fig. 20) follows the "cloudy mountain" style of abstract dotting and ink washes originated by the Song scholar-artist Mi Fu (1052–1107) and his son Mi Youren 米友仁 (1074–1151).<sup>69</sup> This stylistic model was clearly intended to flatter the recipient — mountains that attract rain clouds are a boon to farmers so the image of cloudy mountains has long been associated with beneficent rulership.<sup>70</sup> But the style also links Wang Yuan to the more informal "naturalism" of Northern





20



21

20

Wang Yuan (ca. 1280–after. 1349),  
*The Liangchang Thatched Hall*, before  
1343, handscroll, ink on paper. Private  
collection.

21

Zhu Derun, *The Liangchang Thatched  
Hall*, before 1343, handscroll, ink on  
paper. Private collection.

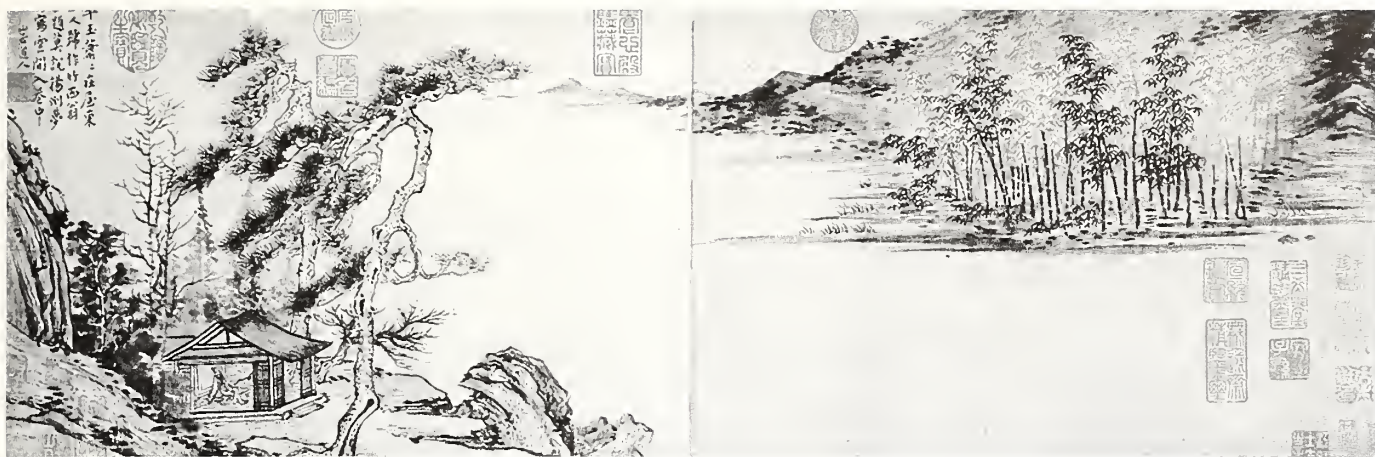
Song scholar-artists. His main departure from the Mi-style is the introduction of several tall pines growing in the foreground — a clear reference to Li-Guo imagery. Zhu Derun's contribution similarly departs from his expected meticulous style (fig. 21). While still employing the Li-Guo idiom of “crab-claw” trees and cloudlike boulders defined by contour lines and graded ink washes, Zhu Derun's painting is now much freer and looser. As Zhu Derun's colophon makes clear, his use of the Li-Guo idiom celebrates the moral virtue of reclusion — as embodied in Guo Xi's intimate images of retirement — rather than with the metaphor of good governance associated with early Song paintings in this style:

The mountain scenery across the river excels at Liangchang,  
Where verdant trees and shady groves surround the thatched hall.  
The retired gentleman does not know of the changes in the world.  
He still seeks the magic recipe written in cinnabar seal script.

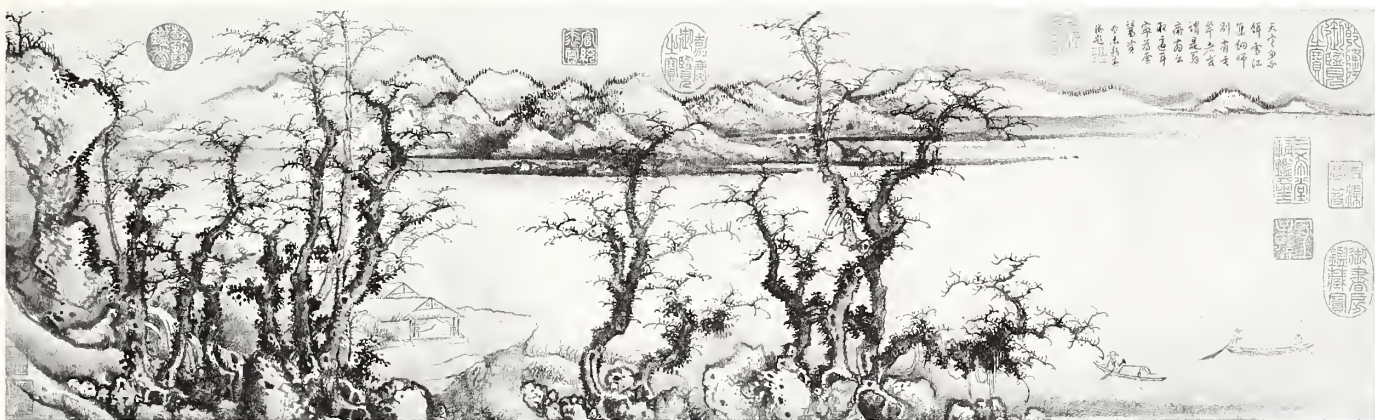
In Zhu Derun's painting, the Liangchang Hall is bracketed by two pairs of ancient trees executed in the familiar manner of Li Cheng and Guo Xi. Sheltered by these emblems of his integrity, the host sits expectantly inside as a young attendant prepares to welcome the approaching guests.

Whereas Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines, Level Distance* envisioned the trees as isolated from the realm of serene retirement — evoked by the distant mountains and remote fisherman, Zhu Derun has eliminated that separation. Zhu Derun's composition places the trees, dwelling, and mountains on the same side of the





22



23

22

Zhang Wo (active mid-14th c.), *The West of Bamboo Thatched Hall*, ca. 1340s, handscroll, ink on paper, 27 x 81 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum. From *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, pl. 112.

23

Yao Yanqing (Yao Tingmei; ca. 1300–after 1360), *Fishing Boats on the Snowy River*, ca. 1340s–50s, handscroll, ink on paper, 24.3 x 81.9 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. From *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, pl. 91.

river, while only a short distance away an approaching boat brings friends from an unseen shore. In Zhu Derun's painting, the viewer, like the visitors in the boat, is invited across the river to the idyllic dwelling surrounded by "verdant trees and shady groves." In placing the retirement residence in the midst of ancient trees, Zhu Derun has endowed his image of Zhang Jing's home with an emblem of the owner's moral compass—a kind of "geomancy of virtue" governs the site.

By the mid-fourteenth century, this vision of a retirement villa situated in a grove of lofty trees had become a new paradigm: the wilderness studio as a "portrait" or alter ego of the occupant. As the yearning for idyllic sanctuaries intensified during the chaotic last years of the Yuan dynasty, such idealized portraits rapidly multiplied. The earliest examples were predominantly in the Li-Guo idiom, including Zhang Wo's 張渥 (active mid-14th c.) *The West of Bamboo Thatched Hall* of the 1340s (fig. 22); *Fishing Boats on the Snowy River* by Yao Yanqing 姚彦卿 (Yao Tingmei 姚廷美; ca. 1300–after 1360) from the 1340s or 1350s (fig. 23); and *Thatched Cottage in a Sparse Grove*, dated 1358, by Zhang Guan 張觀 (active later 14th c.) (fig. 24). But as the leading artists of the late Yuan took up this theme, they began to adapt this imagery to their own stylistic idioms as in *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*, dated 1350 by Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354) (fig. 25) and Wang Meng's *Simple Retreat* of around 1370 (fig. 26).



24



25

24

Zhang Guan (active later 14th c.),  
*Thatched Cottage in a Sparse Grove*,  
1358, handscroll, ink on paper, 25.8 x  
59.6 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. From  
*Zhongguo meishu quanji*, pl. 106.

25

Huang Gongwang (1269–1354), detail,  
*Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains*,  
1350, handscroll, ink on paper, 33 x  
636.9 cm. National Palace Museum,  
Taipei. From *Possessing the Past*, pl. 151.

In each of these images, a studio sheltered by tall trees becomes shorthand for the ideal retreat. The connection between the recipient, the studio's occupant, and the lofty pines or "crab-claw" trees has become a given, while the individual's identification with the moral purity of the recluse is made explicit by placing the studio within a wilderness setting. Indeed, by the end of the Yuan, a man and his studio name have become synonymous, as indicated by Wang Meng's *Simple Retreat*, where the recipient is referred to only by his studio name—the "lofty gentleman of the Simple Retreat."<sup>71</sup> But while this new paradigm continues well into Ming dynasty (1368–1644), when depictions of a man's sobriquet (*biehao* 別號) almost invariably show him seated in his studio sheltered by towering pines (fig. 27), the Li-Guo idiom was largely overshadowed by the more calligraphic Dong-Ju idiom as championed and elaborated upon by the late Yuan masters (fig. 28).<sup>72</sup>

In conclusion, Li-Guo style landscapes enjoyed an important revival among southern artists during the early Yuan dynasty. The roots of this revival may be traced back to the end of the eleventh century. At that time, the metaphorical significance of Li Cheng's lone tree set against a level distance as an emblem of the lofty gentleman of integrity was expanded by his most important follower, Guo Xi. Guo Xi transformed this image into a metaphor for a virtuous ruler or high official. Likewise, Guo Xi's monumental landscapes were understood in court circles as visions of the well-ordered state and celebrations of the ruler's majesty. But late in his career, Guo Xi also created intimate landscapes in which a pair of old





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26

Wang Meng (ca. 1308–1385), *Simple Retreat*, ca. 1370, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 136 x 45 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Promised Gift of the Oscar L. Tang Family.

trees might serve as a metaphor for abiding friendship and solidarity. Such highly personal landscapes were praised by leading scholar-amateurs of the day. With the fall of the Northern Song, the Li-Guo legacy and the scholar-official tradition of self-expressive “ink plays” were sustained in north China under the Jin and early Yuan, but were largely eclipsed in the south by a courtly tradition that favored intimate scenery or archaic blue-green landscapes.<sup>73</sup> With the reunification of China under the Mongols, southern artists became reacquainted with the Li-Guo tradition through three principle avenues: travel to the north, the presence of northern Chinese and non-Chinese officials in the south, and the renewed availability of artworks that had long been out of circulation in the collections of the Song elite. Zhao Mengfu was the first southern artist to rediscover the expressive potential of the Li-Guo tradition. Between 1295 and 1310 he created a succession of Li-Guo inspired images that evolved from eclectic archaism, to fairly literal recreation, to a distillation of Li-Guo motifs into a new literati calligraphic style. Following Zhao Mengfu’s lead, a number of southern artists began to create faithful evocations of the Li-Guo landscape style. Some, like Luo Zhichuan, were inspired by its potential





27

27  
Tang Yin (1470–1524), *Serving Tea*,  
handscroll, ink and color on paper,  
31.2 x 105.8 cm. Palace Museum,  
Beijing. Detail. From *Masterworks  
of Ming and Qing Painting from  
the Forbidden City* (Lansdale, Pa:  
International Arts Council, 1988),  
no. 16.



28

28  
Shen Zhou (1427–1509) and Wen  
Zhengming (1470–1559), *Joint  
Landscape*, ca. 1509 and 1546,  
handscroll, ink on paper, 37 x 1727.8  
cm. The Metropolitan Museum of  
Art, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift,  
1990 (1990.54). Detail

to express the defiant independence of the scholar-recluse, a subject that would have been particularly appealing to Song loyalists. Other artists, such as Tang Di, seem to have adopted the Li-Guo style as a way of pleasing northern patrons. But as the power of the Yuan central government deteriorated during the 1340s and 1350s, the descriptive, representational Li-Guo idiom was increasingly supplanted by the more abstract and calligraphic style associated with Dong Yuan and Juran. In spite of this stylistic shift, the image of ancient trees as emblems of survival remained a dominant theme among scholar-artists. And a second ancient image, that of the wilderness hermitage or pavilion sheltered by old trees, became the metaphorical shorthand for the scholar-recluse's retreat, where traditional values were treasured and sustained.

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## NOTES

- 1 I have benefited from the work of a number of scholars who have examined the Li-Guo tradition and its revival during the Yuan. In addition to the specific references given below, they include: Chu-tsing Li, "Stages of Development in Yüan Landscape Painting, Parts 1, 2," *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 4, no. 2 (1969): 1–10; 4, no. 3 (1969): 1–12; Wai-kam Ho, "Chinese Art Under the Mongols," in *Chinese Art Under the Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368)*, ed. Sherman E. Lee and Wai-kam Ho (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968), 73–112; Suzuki Kei, "A Few Observations Concerning the Li-Kuo School of Landscape Art in the Yüan Dynasty," *Acta Asiatica* 15 (1968): 27–67; and Jerome Silbergeld, "A New Look at Traditionalism in Yüan Dynasty Landscape Painting," *The National Palace Museum Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1980): 1–29.
- 2 For the continuation of the Li-Guo style during the early Ming dynasty, see the work of Li Zai 李在 (active 2nd quarter 15th c.) in Wen C. Fong and James C. Y. Watt et al., *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996) pl. 170 and Dai Jin 戴進 (1388–1462) in Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and the Zhe School* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1993), nos. 43, 45, 47.
- 3 For the persistence of the Li-Guo tradition under the Jin, see Susan Bush, "Clearing After Snow in the Min Mountains and Chin Landscape Painting," *Oriental Art* 11, no. 3 (1965): 163–72; and Susan Bush, "Chin Literati Painting and Landscape Traditions" *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 21, no. 4–5 (1986): 1–26.
- 4 See Marilyn Wong Fu, "The Impact of the Re-unification: Northern Elements in the Life and Art of Hsien-yü Shu (1257?–1302) and Their Relation to Early Yüan Literati Culture," in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 371–433; see also Shou-chien Shih, "You guan Tang Di (1287–1355) ji Yuandai Li-Guo fengge fazhan zhi ruogan wenti" (Tang Di [1287–1355] and the development of the Li-Guo style during the Yuan dynasty) *Yishu xue* (Study of the arts) 5 (March 1991): 83–131.
- 5 For investigations into the metaphorical significance of old trees, see Li Lincan, "Pine and Rock, Wintry Tree, Old Tree and Bamboo and Rock, the Development of a Theme" *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 9, no. 6 (1970): 1–12; and Richard M. Barnhart, *Wintry Forests, Old Trees: Some Landscape Themes in Chinese Painting*, Exh. cat. (New York: China House Gallery, China Institute of America, 1972).
- 6 The civil service examinations were discontinued in the north after 1234 and in the south after 1272; they were not reinstituted until 1315, and even then the process was so tainted that many scholars avoided them; see Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 272; see also *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 710–1368*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 638.
- 7 For a discussion of the early Yuan redirection away from descriptive representation in preference for calligraphic expression, see Wen Fong's chapter "The Yüan Dynasty: The Rise of Self Expression" in Wen C. Fong et al., *Images of the Mind: Selections from the Edward L. Elliott Family and John B. Elliott Collections of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting at The Art Museum, Princeton University* (Princeton: Art Museum, Princeton University, 1984), 94–129. For



- an examination of the self-expressive dimension of calligraphy, see Robert E. Harrist Jr., "Reading Chinese Calligraphy," in Robert E. Harrist Jr., and Wen C. Fong, *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection* (Princeton: Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 3–27, especially 21–24; see also Wen C. Fong, "Chinese Calligraphy: Theory and History," in Harrist and Fong, *Embodied Image*, 28–84, especially 58–62.
- 8 James Cahill has explored how painting styles and themes often carried explicit metaphorical messages intended either to legitimize imperial rule or to protest or criticize the status quo; see Cahill, "Political Themes in Chinese Painting" in *Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting*, The Franklin D. Murphy Lectures (Lawrence, Kans.: Spencer Museum of Art, 1988), 12–36. Martin Powers has shown that the tension between aristocratic and scholarly uses of the Li-Guo imagery has its roots in the eleventh-century cultural competition between the imperial court and the educated elite. See Martin J. Powers, "Discourses of Representation in Tenth and Eleventh Century China," in *The Art of Interpreting*, ed. Susan C. Scott (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 89–126.
  - 9 See Richard Vinograd, "New Light on Tenth-Century Sources for Landscape Painting Styles of the Late Yüan Period," in *Chügoku kaigashi ronshü: Suzuki Kei Sensei kanreki-kinen* (Essays on the history of Chinese painting: Festschrift for Professor Suzuki Kei), (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 1981), 2–30.
  - 10 Jing Hao, *Bifa ji* (Note on the art of the brush), in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* (Compendium of Chinese calligraphy and painting), ed. Lu Fusheng et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1992–94) vol. 1, 6; hereafter cited as ZSQ. Translation adapted from Shio Sakanishi, *The Spirit of the Brush: Being the Outlook of Chinese Painters on Nature From Eastern Chin to Five Dynasties, A.D. 317–960* (London: John Murray, 1939), 90. For Jing Hao, see Kiyohiko Munakata, *Ching Hao's "Pi-fa-chi": A Note on the Art of Brush* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1974); for an alternative translation of this text see p. 14.
  - 11 For Li Cheng, see Wai-kam Ho, "Li Ch'eng and the Mainstream of Northern Sung Painting," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 18–24 June 1970* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1972), 251–83.
  - 12 See Peter C. Sturman, "The Donkey Rider as Icon: Li Cheng and Early Chinese Landscape Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 55, no. 1–2 (1995): 84, n. 92.
  - 13 Stylistically, this painting reflects the spatial innovations and brush mannerisms of Guo Xi and may well be by him or a close follower. The presence of the roots and trunk of a second pine rising along the left side of the present composition suggests that this work was originally part of a multipanel screen.
  - 14 Jing Hao, *Bifa ji*, in ZSQ vol. 1, 6. Translation from Martin J. Powers, "When Is a Landscape Like a Body?," in *Landscape, Culture, and Power in Chinese Society*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1998), 6.
  - 15 Jing Hao, *Bifa ji*, in ZSQ vol. 1, 6. Translation adapted from Sakanishi, *Spirit of the Brush*, 86. In his colophon to the painting, the former owner Zhang Daqian 張大千 (Chang Ta-ch'ien, 1899–1983) attributes the painting to Li Cheng on the basis of its resemblance to a Li Cheng composition described by Mi Fu 米芾 (1051–1107) in his *Hua shi* 畫史 (History of painting).
- For a thorough discussion of the painting, see Sturman, "Donkey Rider," 43–97.
- 16 I am here summarizing Richard Barnhart's observations about this painting; see Barnhart, *Wintry Forests*, 16. The date of this painting is still debated. Wen Fong has assigned it to the early twelfth century while Peter Sturman has advocated dating it earlier, possibly to the time of Li Cheng himself. See Wen C. Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 8th–14th century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 79, 116–17, n. 27; and Sturman "Donkey Rider," 94.
  - 17 Sturman, "Donkey Rider" and Powers, "Landscape Like a Body," 3. For Powers, this imagery belongs to "a long rhetorical tradition in which a scholar's integrity is perceived as shining more brightly in the face of obstacles such as poverty or political oppression" (p. 16). In Power's view, the agonistic disposition of a lone tree against a hostile environment reflects a seismic social shift that occurred in the tenth century when, as the old aristocratic order was failing, independent scholar-artists such as Jing Hao and Li Cheng challenged "the cultural hegemony of the court and aristocracy" through images of landscape that conveyed a new set of social values based not on birthright and privilege, but on moral integrity (Powers, pp. 5ff).
  - 18 Deng Chun, *Hua ji* (On painting, continued; 1167), in ZSQ vol. 2, *juan* 10, 722. Translation from Powers, "Landscape Like a Body," 16–17. For other translations of this passage see Charles Hartman, "Literary and Visual Interactions in Lo Chih-ch'uan's *Crows in Old Trees*," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 28 (1993): 144; and Robert J. Maeda, *Two Sung Texts on Chinese Painting and the Landscape Styles of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (New York: Garland, 1978), 57.



- 19 Powers, "Landscape Like a Body," 18.
- 20 See Guo Xi, *Lin quan gao zhi* (Lofty ambitions in forests and streams), compiled by Guo Si, 1117, in ZSQ vol. 1, 498. Translation from Powers, "Landscape Like a Body," 19. For alternate translations of this passage see Shio Sakanishi, trans., *An Essay on Landscape Painting by Kuo Hsi* (London: John Murray, 1935), 37; Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956–58) vol. 1, 223; and Wen C. Fong, *Summer Mountains: The Timeless Landscape* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), opposite pl. 25.
- 21 Martin Powers makes this point (see his "Discourses of Representation," especially pp. 95–101) and also cites She Cheng 佘城, *Bei Song tuhua yuan zhi xin tan* (A new investigation of the Northern Song painting academy) (Taipei: Wen shi zhe chubanshe, 1988), for corroborating evidence of the rise of alternative subjects and styles at this time.
- 22 Shih, "You guan Tang Di," 92.
- 23 For a detailed discussion of Guo Xi's painting in the Jade Hall, see Scarlett Jang, "Realm of the Immortals: Paintings Decorating the Jade Hall of the Northern Song," *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1992): 81–96.
- 24 Shih, "You guan Tang Di," 92–93.
- 25 See Ping Foong, "Guo Xi's Intimate Landscapes and the Case of *Old Trees, Level Distance*," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 35 (2000): 87–115. Foong makes a persuasive case for accepting the Metropolitan painting as Guo Xi's *Autumn Mountains, Level Distance* (*Qiushan pingyuan* 秋山平遠), a short handscroll that originally belonged to Wen Yanbo 文彦博 (1006–1097) and once bore colophons by Su Shi and Huang Tingjian.
- 26 For Su Shi's text, from the first of a pair of poems titled "Two poems on a painting of cut branches by assistant magistrate Wang of Yanling" (*Shu Yanling Wang Zhuhu suo hua zhezhi er shou* 書鄢陵王主簿所畫折枝二首), see *Su Shi shi ji he zhu* (Su Shih's collected poetry with annotations) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), *juan* 29, 1437; see also Susan Bush, "The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–1636)," *Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies* 27 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971): 32. Translation by James Cahill in Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 159.
- 27 Powers, "Discourses of Representation," 101.
- 28 Deng Chun relates how Huizong presented his father with a cartload of paintings by Guo Xi that were no longer wanted in the palace. See Deng Chun, *Hua ji*, in ZSQ, vol. 2: *juan* 10, 723–24. For translations of this passage, see Maeda, *Two Sung Texts*, 61–62 and Sirén, *Chinese Painting*, vol. 1, 217. For Wang Ximeng's sole surviving masterpiece see *Zhongguo lidai huihua: Gugong bowuyuan cang huaji* (Chinese painting of successive dynasties: Selected paintings from the collection of the Palace Museum) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1978–), 2, pls. 93–132. For Li Tang, see *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huihua bian* 4, *Liang Song huihua* (Complete collection of Chinese arts: Painting series, vol. 4. The two Song dynasties' painting), ed. Fu Xinian (Beijing: Jen-min mei-shu ch'u-pan-she, 1988), pls. 1–3. Given Huizong's apparent aversion to the works of Guo Xi it may be significant that Guo Xi's *Old Trees, Level Distance* was included in Huizong's imperial collection, as attested by the presence of his seal "Xuanhe Era Imperial Archives" (*Xuanhe zhongnui* 宣和中秘) in the center of the composition (the Qianlong 乾隆 Emperor [r. 1736–95] added his seal just to its left).
- 29 Bush, *Chinese Literati*, especially 87–91 and 94–95. See also Bush, "Chin Literati Painting."
- 30 See Chu-tsing Li, "The Role of Wu-hsing in Early Yüan Artistic Development Under Mongol Rule," in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. Langlois, 362.
- 31 A rare surviving example of a scholar-amateur blue-green landscape from this time is *Fisherman's Lodge at Mount Xisai*, ca. 1170, by the scholar-official Li Jie 李結 (ca. 1124–after 1191). See Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 248–56 and You-heng Feng, "Fishing Society at Hsi-sai Mountain by Li Chieh (1124–before 1197): A Study of Scholar-Official's Art in the Southern Sung Period" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1996).
- 32 For Qian Xuan's blue-green landscapes, see Shou-chien Shih, "The Eremitic Landscapes of Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–before 1307)" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1984) and Fong, *Beyond Representation*: 314–19. See also Richard E. Vinograd, "Some Landscapes Related to the Blue-and-Green Manner from the Early Yüan Period," *Artibus Asiae* 41, no. 2–3 (1979), 101–31.
- 33 For an illustration and discussion of this painting, see Shou-chien Shih's essay and entry in Fong et al., *Images of the Mind*, 102–03; 280–83. Another of Zhao Mengfu's early blue-green landscapes is *Clear Distance View of Wuxing*; see *Zhao Mengfu huaji* (Selection of paintings by Zhao Mengfu) (Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1995), pl. 28.
- 34 Marilyn Fu has emphasized that the impact of service in the north on Zhao Mengfu's art is part of the larger phenomenon of political reunification after 150 years of separation between the north and south; see Fu, "Impact of the Re-unification," 371–433. See also Chu-tsing Li, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains: A Landscape by Zhao Meng-fu*

- (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1965), 19–21.
- 35 For an illustration and discussion of this painting, see Chu-tsing Li, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains*; see also Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 274–77. For the painting's connection to Dong Yuan prototypes see Richard M. Barnhart, *Marriage of the Lord of the River: A Lost Landscape by Tung Yüan*, Artibus Asiae Supplementum 27 (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1970). For Zhou Mi, see Ankeney Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mists Passing Before One's Eyes: An Annotated Translation* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002).
- 36 For this painting, see Richard E. Vinograd, "River Village — The Pleasure of Fishing and Chao Meng-fu's Li-Kuo Style Landscapes" *Artibus Asiae* 40, no. 2–3 (1978): 124–42; see also Wai-kam Ho et al., *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art*, (Exh. cat., Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art with Indiana University Press, 1980), no. 80.
- 37 Marilyn Fu notes that Zhao Mengfu returned to the south in 1287, 1289, and 1292 as well as in 1295; see Fu, "Impact of the Re-unification," 387, n. 27.
- 38 Fu, "Impact of the Re-unification," esp. 372–79, 401. For Li Kan, see Kao Mu-sen, "Li K'an: An Early Fourteenth-Century Painter," *Chinese Culture* 22, no. 3 (1981): 85–101. For Gao Kegong see Wu Baohe, *Gao Kegong yanjiu* (Research on Gao Kegong) (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1987); see also Curtis Hansman Brizendine, "Cloudy Mountains: Kao K'o-kung, and the Mi Tradition" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1980). For Xianyu Shu, see Marilyn Wong Fu, "Hsien-yü Shu's Calligraphy and His Admonitions' Scroll of 1299" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1983).
- 39 Translation from Fu, "Impact of the Re-unification," 409–10. For an illustration of the painting and colophons see *Umi o watatta Chūgoku no sho: Eriotto korekushon to Sō Gen no meiseki* (Chinese calligraphy from across the ocean: The Elliott Collection and Song and Yuan masterpieces), ed. Osaka Municipal Museum of Art (Osaka: Yomiuri Shimbun, 2003), no. 77.
- 40 Translation from Fu, "Impact of the Re-unification," 412.
- 41 For *Water Village*, see Chu-tsing Li, *Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains*, 53ff; see also *Zhongguo lidai huihua* 4, pls. 22–27.
- 42 See Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 276–77 and fig. 106. Zhao Mengfu's firsthand acquaintance with works in the Li-Guo tradition is further attested to by Zhou Mi, who recorded that Zhao Mengfu owned Li Cheng's *Reading a Stele* and Wang Shen's *Continuous Mountains Separating the Valleys*. Ankeney Weitz points out that Zhao Mengfu did not bring the Li Cheng back from the north as Zhou Mi first saw the Li Cheng in 1289 in the collection of Wang Zhi. In 1292 he saw it again in the collection of Zhang Qian. Finally, he saw it in Zhao Mengfu's collection in 1295. See Weitz, "Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mists Passing Before One's Eyes," 84 (line 5.3) and 178 (lines 32.12 and 32.17). Ankeney Weitz, *Zhou Mi's Record of Clouds and Mists Passing Before One's Eyes: An Annotated Translation* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002).
- 43 McCausland notes that Wang Shen painted *Misty River and Tiered Peaks* in 1084 on his return to the capital from exile. In 1085 Su Shi, inspired by the painting, wrote a poem of the same title, which Zhao Mengfu transcribed on at least one occasion. See Shane McCausland, "Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) and the Revolution of Elite Culture in Mongol China," (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2000), 221–23.
- 44 See Foong, "Guo Xi's Intimate Landscapes," 100ff. Although it appears that any Song colophons had been separated from this scroll prior to Zhao Mengfu's viewing, he certainly would have known that Su, Huang, and others had composed poems for several such intimate paintings by Guo and that this awareness undoubtedly influenced his own appreciation of this work. The earliest surviving colophon presently attached to the Metropolitan painting is that of Feng Zizhen; for illustrations of all its appended colophons, see *Ōbei shūzō Chūgoku hōsho meiseki shū* (Chinese calligraphy in American and European collections), ed. Nakata Yūjirō and Shen Fu (Tokyo: Chūōkōron-sha, 1981–83), 3, pls. 68–70.
- 45 For Princess Sengge and her collection see Shen C. Y. Fu, *Yuandai huangshi shuhua shoucang shihue* (A brief history of the Yuan imperial collections of calligraphy and painting) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1981). Reprint of a four-part article first published in *Gugong jikan* 13, no. 1–4 (1978–79).
- 46 McCausland, "Zhao Mengfu," 230. Zhao arrived in Dadu late in the tenth month of 1310; see Ren Daobin, *Zhao Mengfu xinian* (Chronology of Zhao Mengfu) (Henan: Henan remin meishu chubanshe, 1984), 142.
- 47 McCausland, "Zhao Mengfu," 230. Wen Fong also dates *Twin Pines* to around 1310; see Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 439. Alfreda Murck has argued that if tall mountains are a reference to high rank and imperial majesty, then lowland compositions may well suggest the state of exile or reclusion; see

- Alfreda Murck, "The Meaning of the 'Eight Views of Hsiao-Hsiang': Poetry and Painting in Sung China" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1995), 144–51.
- 48 For early literati uses of the term "playfulness," see Powers, "Discourses of Representation," 101.
- 49 Parts of this description are from Maxwell K. Hearn, *How to Read Chinese Paintings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), 78–79.
- 50 Translation from Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 439.
- 51 Foong documents how Song literati not only added appreciative colophons to Guo Xi's works, but actively sought similar paintings from him for themselves. See Foong, "Guo Xi's Intimate Landscapes," 103–05.
- 52 For this painting see Wan-go Weng and Yang Boda, *The Palace Museum: Peking, Treasures of the Forbidden City* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982), 192–93. Translation from Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 279; see also Fong et al., *Images of the Mind*, 104.
- 53 The translation of the poem is from Richard M. Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven: Sung and Yuan Paintings from the C. C. Wang Family Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 120.
- 54 A distant descendant of the first Song emperor, Zhao Mengfu, as a young man, was appointed to a sinecure post in the Song government. See Ren, *Zhao Mengfu xinian*, 18, 26. See also Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 272–73.
- 55 See Hartman, "Literary and Visual Interactions." See also Barnhart, *Along the Border of Heaven*: 121–26 and Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 402–07.
- 56 For Li Kan's service in the south see Kao Mu-sen, "Li K'an: An Early Fourteenth-Century Painter," 90–92. Li first met Xianyu Shu in 1288 and first met Zhao Mengfu at Xianyu Shu's residence in 1298. For Li Kan's bamboo paintings, see Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 284–85; see also Wai-kam Ho et al., *Eight Dynasties*, no. 83, for his *Four Purities* handscroll of 1308, which bears a colophon by Zhao Mengfu.
- 57 See Chu-tsing Li, "Rocks and Trees and the Art of Ts'ao Chih-po," *Artibus Asiae* 23 (1960): 153–92.
- 58 See Shih, "You guan Tang Di," 100–01. Twenty years later, in 1350, Cao painted another Li-Guo style landscape for the Uighur Mubarak, a high official who had retired to the Suzhou area. See Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 295–97, pl. 150.
- 59 For Tang Di, see Shih, "You guan Tang Di."
- 60 Shih, "You guan Tang Di," 92–96; see also Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 286–88.
- 61 A similar image is *Drinking in the Shade of Pines* of 1334; see *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huifhua bian* 5, *Yuansdai huifhua* (Complete collection of Chinese arts: Painting series, vol. 5, Yuan dynasty painting), ed. Fu Xinian (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1989), pl. 89.
- 62 For Wu Zhen, see James Cahill, "Wu Chen: A Chinese Landscapist and Bamboo Painter of the Fourteenth Century," (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958) and Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yuan Dynasty, 1279–1368* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1976), 68–74. *Twin Junipers* is dedicated to "the respected master Leisuo 雷所" ("Thunder Place") who was probably a Daoist prelate. A portrait of the Chan Buddhist monk Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263–1323), seated beneath a pine tree is an example of the use of this imagery in a Buddhist context. See Helmut Brinker, "Ch'an Portraits in a Landscape," *Archives of Asian Art* 27 (1973–74): fig. 8.
- 63 For Ni Zan, see Fong et al., *Images of the Mind*, 105–26; see also Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 311–19.
- 64 For a detailed discussion of *The Six Gentlemen*, see Fong et al., *Images of the Mind*, 113–16.
- 65 For Wang Yuan, see Fong and Watt et al., *Possessing the Past*, 288–91.
- 66 For Zhu Derun, see Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 79–80; see also *Zhongguo meishu quanji: Huifhua bian* 5, *Yuansdai huifhua*, pls. 85–88. For a similar Tang Di composition, see above, n. 63. Zhu Derun once submitted a painting to Emperor Yingzong, *Hunting in the Snow*, so it is likely that he was at least occasionally called upon to serve as a court artist; see Shih, "You guan Tang Di," 97–98.
- 67 Zhang Jing was an able government administrator who became magistrate of Suzhou in 1359 under the regional strongman Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321–1367), who began recruiting Chinese scholars into his government after had he seized the city in 1356. The Liangchang Thatched Hall had been built for Jing's father Zhang Jian 張監 (1281–1360), when the latter had been a tutor to the family of Wang Tianjue 王天覺 (Wang Juexuan 王覺軒, active mid-14th c.). The hall's name derived from the Zhang family's ancient home, which was located at the base of Mount Liangchang in Jintan 金壇, Jiangsu Province. In 1352 Jingxi was ravaged by rebel soldiers and many of its inhabitants fled to Suzhou. See Zhang Guangbin 張光賓, "Kan hua shuo gu, cong Chen Ruyan 'Jingxi tu' shuo qi" (Looking at paintings to comment on the past, observations starting from Chen Ruyan's "Depiction of Jingxi") in *Du shu shuo hua: Taibei Gugong xingzou ershi nian* (Studies of calligraphy and painting: Twenty years at the Taipei Palace Museum). Zhang Guangbin, ed. (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2008), 291–94 (reprinted from



- Gugong wenwu yuekan* (*National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art*) 1, no. 1 [1983]. See also Zhang Guangbin, *Yuan si da jia* (*Four Great Masters of the Yuan*). Trans. Karen L. Brock and Robert L. Thorp (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1975), 6 (English translation: 7); and Fong et al., *Images of the Mind*, 113. Cao Zhibo painted *A Pavilion Under Old Pines* for “the Liangchang Thatched Hall”; see *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, ed. Lee and Ho, cat. no. 228.
- 68 Around this time Ke Jiushi brought a calligraphy by Su Shi from the capital and left it at Wang Tianjue’s Hall of Cherished Feelings in Jingxi. In 1343 Ke again visited the Wang family and added another colophon to Su Shi’s calligraphy. He may have inscribed *Liangchang Thatched Hall* during the same visit since he died later that year (November 12) in Suzhou; see Zhang Guangbin, *Yuan si da jia*, 131.
- 69 For the Mi style of landscapes see Peter Charles Sturman, “Mi Youren and the Inherited Literati Tradition: Dimensions of Ink-Play,” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1989).
- 70 Scarlett Jang makes this point with reference to murals of “clouds emerging from mountains” decorating the residence of Wen Yanbo — the same official for whom Guo Xi painted his short landscape handscroll (see note 25); see Jang, “Realm of the Immortals,” 81. Mi Youren painted many such images in the service of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (1107–1187, reign 1127–1162), who undoubtedly used them as presentation pieces for his officials. For example Mi Youren’s *Cloudy Mountains* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum; see Fong, *Beyond Representation*, 165–68.
- 71 For a discussion of this painting, see Maxwell K. Hearn and Wen C. Fong, *Along the Riverbank: Chinese Paintings from the C. C. Wang Family Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 118–24.
- 72 For the use of an individual’s sobriquet as the subject matter of painting, see Liu Jiu’an, “Wumen huajia zhi biehao tu ji jianbie juli” (Illustrations of sobriquets by Suzhou painters and some examples of how to recognize them), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* (Palace Museum journal) 3, no. 3 (1990): 54–61.
- 73 For “intimate scenery” landscapes, see Lin Po-ting, “The Relationship Between Intimate Scenery and Shoal-and-Water-fowl Paintings in the Sung Dynasty,” in *Arts of the Sung and Yüan: Papers Prepared for an International Symposium Organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in Conjunction with the Exhibition Splendors of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*, ed. Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith (New York: Department of Asian Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 87–108.

## CHANGING MEDIA

### *The Transmission of Images in Yuan Painting*

#### Abstract

Among the Chinese hierarchy of two-dimensional media on paper, painting is ranked first, followed by woodblock printing and rubbings. These three media differ in the way they transmit pictures, depending on the characteristics of each. Temple workshops and the collection of paintings in a temple's library played a key role in the spread of images. This paper will explore the implications of these facts in a case study of a portrait that exists in all three media, a portrait of the Chan abbot Zhongfeng Mingben (1262–1323) of the Yuan dynasty.

MONASTERIES IN IMPERIAL CHINA, especially large ones, were not only religious but also cultural centers. Encounters between educated monks and artists left visible traces of mutual interaction.<sup>1</sup> Visiting artists and dignitaries would leave a piece of calligraphy, a poem, or a painting, which was then stored in the monastery's library. Such artworks could in turn serve as models in the scriptoria and painting workshops of the temple. The possession of works by famous artists enhanced the social reputation of a monastery. To attract pilgrims and potential donors, monk artisans in the scriptoria and painting workshops often reproduced these temple treasures in other, cheaper media. A painting could be cut into stone or wood, and prints or rubbings thereof given to sub-temples or visitors from far away places. Japanese monks studying in Chinese temples took home such prints, which in Japan served as the basis for new paintings. In the course of time, many of the original artworks were lost but in some instances their derivatives have survived, which allows for reconstructing the original work. It is crucial for the exploration of this line of transmission to analyze the characteristics of the different media to understand how certain changes in appearance came about. A close scrutiny of the relationship between artists and monks or specific temples can also help to attribute securely hitherto anonymous paintings to certain artists, as has recently been the case with the long handscroll *Great White Mountain Temple* 太白山寺 to the Yuan period painter Wang Meng 王蒙 (ca. 1308–1385).<sup>2</sup>

In the study of Chinese calligraphy, the fundamental role of different copying techniques for the transmission and continuity of a particular writing style is well known. Centuries ago, the last original ink characters from the brush of the Jin master Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca. 307–ca. 365) and his son Wang Xianzhi 王献之 (344–388) have ceased to exist. The closest we can come to form an idea of what their calligraphy looked like are Tang tracing copies. In the Song period, these tracings were carved into woodblocks and used to make rubbings, which served subsequent calligraphers as models. Both tracing copies and rubbings of the works of the two Wangs were imperially commissioned and sponsored projects and are held in



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Xu Beihong (1895–1953), *Mount Tianmu Landscape* 天目山風景, 1935, oil on canvas, 67 x 81 cm. Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, Beijing.

the highest esteem, some even considered national treasures. This amazing continuity characterizes the art of Chinese calligraphy.

Similar practices of copying can be observed in the art of painting. Here, ancient works were usually copied by hand rather than tracing or they were imitated, that is, painted in the manner of an earlier artist. In religious figure painting, it was quite common for a hand-painted image to be carved into stone, for example on the back of a Buddhist stele, and then used to make ink rubbings. Because the painters in most cases were anonymous artisans or monks, these paintings were not venerated as the works of famous masters. This situation changes dramatically, however, once a celebrated artist comes into the picture or when imperial interference for political ends occurs. With the exception of the well-studied history of the image of the Wangchuan villa 輞川圖, there are hardly any pre-Yuan paintings extant in various media that allow us to investigate the complex relationship between original painting and its copies.

A painted portrait of the Chan abbot Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1262–1323) from the Yuan period exists in all three media: painting, print, and rubbing. Zhongfeng Mingben was a monk and served as abbot in a monastery on Mount Tianmu. This monastery had served both as a religious and a cultural center long before the Yuan dynasty and continued well into the twentieth century.

When Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895–1953) painted the scenery of Mount Tianmu 天目山 in oil (fig. 1), he stood in a long tradition of artists, who, after visiting the Buddhist temples and Daoist sites on Mount Tianmu, left a picture, a piece of calligraphy, a poem, or a travelogue of their journey. From the Ming dynasty, Wen Boren's 文伯仁 (1502–1575) painting (fig. 2), dated 1574, now in the Osaka Municipal Museum, depicts the same mountain.<sup>3</sup> The local gazetteer of Mount Tianmu informs us that already in the Song dynasty, illustrious personalities and great artists, like Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), had come to the temple. Su Shi wrote a poem in his calligraphy and gave it as a gift to the temple.





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Wen Boren (1502–1575), *Tianmu jiyou tu*, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 140.4 x 39.3 cm. Osaka Municipal Museum.

For art historians of the twenty-first century, it is often difficult to locate works of art formerly in the possession of a temple. Each temple has its own history of what happened to its collection of artworks. In the case of the temples at Mount Tianmu, a Japanese air strike in 1941 flattened most of the buildings. The Japanese believed Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), who had actually visited the temple in 1939 and organized resistance troops, to be in hiding there. Fearing an impending bombing, the monks and local authorities had deposited the books and artworks from the temple in other temples in the area and in the local library at Ling'an city before the attack. Many other temples still active in the 1960s and '70s suffered from the persecutions of the Cultural Revolution. Monks and nuns were killed and artworks burnt or melted down. Interestingly, the Chinese Buddhist Association had begun to make an inventory of artworks in temples already in the early 1950s. Some of them survived the Cultural Revolution, thanks to their inclusion in that list and to Zhou Enlai, who tried to save important artworks.



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Pan Gongshou (1741–1794), *Portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben*, hanging scroll, ink and light colors on paper, 127 x 44.5 cm. National Palace Museum Taipei.

The two most illustrious personalities related to Mount Tianmu in the Yuan dynasty were the Chan abbot Zhongfeng Mingben and the painter, calligrapher, poet, and statesman Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322). Since Zhao Mengfu was an eminent literati artist, works from his brush were studied and copied, unlike the paintings by anonymous artisan monks, who produced the portraits of religious teachers. The artist's social status prevented the portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben from falling into oblivion. Later artists became interested in this portrait primarily as a work of art by a famous literati painter and only secondarily because of its subject.

Zhao Mengfu painted a portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben in 1309. This painting no longer exists, only its inscription is recorded in the collected works of Zhao Mengfu.<sup>4</sup> A copy of the portrait by the Qing dynasty artist Pan Gongshou 潘恭壽 (1741–1794) (fig. 3) is now held in the National Palace Museum Taipei. On the silk of the mounting and separate from the painting are two inscriptions. On the right is an inscription by the scholar and connoisseur Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733–1818), dated 1791, and on the left is one by his friend Wang Wenzhi 王文治 (1730–1802), dated 1801. Both scholars comment on the history of this portrait from Zhao Mengfu to Pan Gongshou. Pan Gongshou not only copied the painting and the inscription by Zhao Mengfu but also an inscription, signature, and seal by Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636).

It is clear that Dong Qichang knew this portrait since he had inscribed it. There is an interesting connection between the original — now lost — by Zhao Mengfu, a





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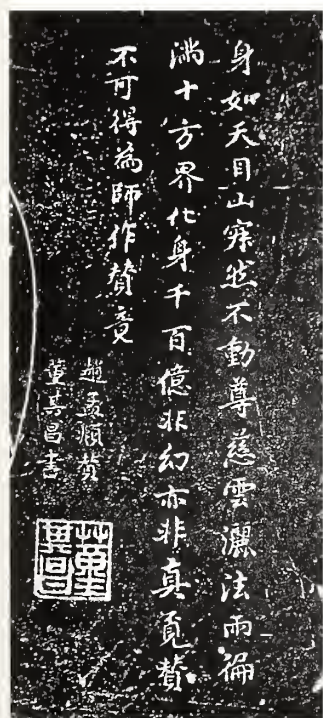
4  
Rubbing, Zhao Mengfu, Zhongfeng Mingben and Zhao Mengxian, 89.2 x 32.5 cm. Songjiang Museum.

rubbing (fig. 4), and Dong Qichang. The engraved stone slab of an image that portrays Zhongfeng Mingben in the middle, Zhao Mengfu on the left, and his cousin, Zhao Mengxian 趙孟頫 (exact dates unknown),<sup>5</sup> is still extant at the Songjiang Museum. All three men are depicted in half-length in a circle, a format typical for the representation of Chan priests. Originally, this stone slab was part of a temple wall, though the temple no longer exists.<sup>6</sup> Above the portrait of each man are examples of each man's calligraphy. Below are inscriptions by three artists of the Ming dynasty, namely Dong Qichang, who wrote the colophon on Zhongfeng Mingben; Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639) on Zhao Mengxian; and the painter Sun Kehong 孫克宏 (1533–1611) on Zhao Mengfu. Dong Qichang's inscription quotes the text on the now-lost portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben by Zhao Mengfu (fig. 5). Dong Qichang wrote the text in a different compositional arrangement from the identical text on Pan Gongshou's copy of Zhao Mengfu's painting in only three lines as opposed to four. He then states:

Inscription by Zhao Mengfu	趙孟頫贊
Calligraphy by Dong Qichang	董其昌書

The signature is followed by Dong Qichang's seal. Why should Dong Qichang, who had no professed interest in figure painting, grace this portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben with an inscription? This can only be explained in part by his involvement with Chan Buddhism. Dong Qichang's motivation lay primarily in the fact that he knew from his studies of Zhao Mengfu's works, both theoretical and practical, that Zhao Mengfu had painted a portrait of the abbot. By inscribing this portrait in the round with the identical text of the full-length portrait, he connected the two works and related them to Zhao Mengfu.

The engraved image of Zhongfeng Mingben on the stone slab (fig. 6) has to be based on the same source as Pan Gongshou's copy. The type of chair and the straw mat are similar, as are the robe and the knot tied over Zhongfeng Mingben's left chest, the way in which the hands are folded, the haircut and moustache, and the abbot's hallmark smile. Rubbings made from this image engraved in stone allowed for its dissemination.



5  
Detail, inscription by Dong Qichang (1555–1636) on rubbing of Zhao Mengfu, Zhongfeng Mingben and Zhao Mengxian, fig. 4.





6

6  
Detail, Zhongfeng Mingben  
(1262–1323), on rubbing of Zhao  
Mengfu, *Zhongfeng Mingben and  
Zhao Mengxian*, fig. 4.



7

7  
Unkoku Tōyō (1612–1668),  
*Zhongfeng Mingben Travelling in a  
Boat by Moonlight*, hanging scroll,  
light colors on silk, 35.5 x 49.8 cm.  
Ryōgon-ji Temple.

It is conceivable that such rubbings in turn were retranslated into the medium of painting. This was most likely the case in a work by the seventeenth-century Japanese painter Unkoku Tōyō 雲谷等与 (1612–1668) (fig. 7). The deep wrinkles on Zhongfeng Mingben's forehead and the lines around his eyes and mouth indicate that Unkoku Tōyō's source for this image was a rubbing or a woodblock print. In his painting, the Japanese artist retained the somewhat harsh and angular lines typical for the medium of woodblock prints or engraved stone slabs. Unkoku Tōyō not only drew on such pictorial sources but was also thoroughly familiar with texts on Zhongfeng Mingben, especially his biography. There is no tradition of depicting the abbot in a boat in Chinese painting. From his biography it is known, however, that Zhongfeng Mingben travelled on the lakes and rivers in the South on a boat. By introducing a boat to the scene, in which the Chan monk rests, pensively looking at the reflection of the moon in the water—a reference to his sobriquet *Illusory Abode* 幻住 *Huanzhu*—Unkoku Tōyō created a meaningful and readable image, merging visual and textual material.

In fact, there is a portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben as a woodblock print, now mounted as a hanging scroll, in the Shōjūji temple 正宗寺 in Ibaragi prefecture (fig. 8). Although less individualized, one can still recognize the abbot. His pose is again similar to Pan Gongshou's copy of Zhao Mengfu's painting, only the surroundings have changed to an outdoor setting and the inscription on the woodblock print is in the style of Zhongfeng Mingben's calligraphy.

There are several possibilities of how this woodblock image came into existence. The anonymous artist, most likely a monk in a temple workshop, knew the rubbing of Zhongfeng Mingben. This would explain the pose of the sitter and the wrinkles on his face. He must have known Zhongfeng Mingben's calligraphy, since the rendition in the woodblock print contains all the typical features of the abbot's handwriting. The unknown monk artist then created a pastiche, basing the features of Zhongfeng Mingben on the rubbing and the rock background and placement of the shoes in front of the subject on stock repertoire of settings commonly encountered in the images of many other monks. The calligraphy could have come from a letter by Zhongfeng Mingben in the possession of a Japanese temple.



8



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8  
Anonymous, *Portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben*, woodblock print mounted as a hanging scroll, 64.4 x 25.6 cm. Shōjūji temple, Ibaragi Prefecture.

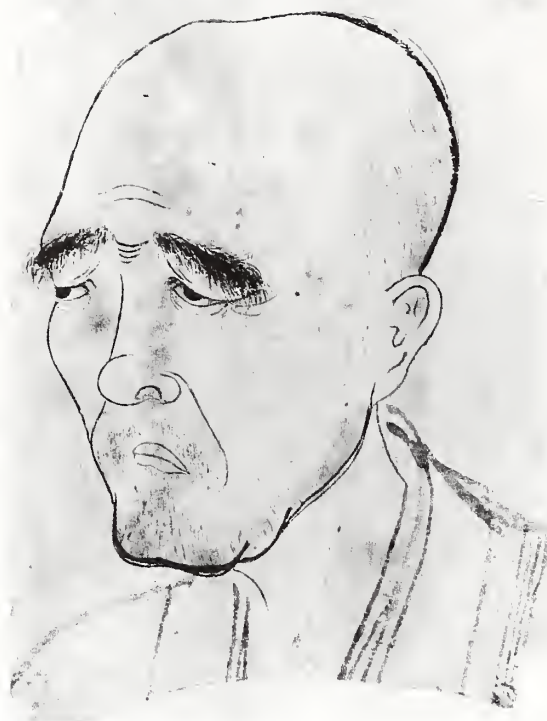
9  
Anonymous artist, *Portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben*, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 123.5 x 51.2 cm. Jishōin Temple, Kyoto.

Another option, though less likely, is that the woodblock print was based on an original painting that is now lost. In the only extant painting in Japan of Zhongfeng Mingben in an outdoor setting, the abbot is shown in a pose that mirrors that of the woodblock print (fig. 9). The print, though, is not based on this painting. The setting is different. In the painting, there is a pine tree and bamboo as opposed to the cavelike setting of the print, and the inscription on the painting is by another monk, not the calligraphy of Zhongfeng Mingben.

The most commonly used method to create a portrait of a Chan monk during his lifetime was to sketch the sitter directly and then work out the painting from the sketch. Such sketches, after the sitter's death or in a distant place, then served as the basis for new paintings. A well-known case is that of the Japanese abbot Haku'un Egyō 白雲慧曉 (1228–1297). His disciple Ketsuzan Ryōi 傑山了偉 took a sketch of his teacher (fig. 10) with him to China where he went to study Chan under the guidance of Zhongfeng Mingben. There, the sketch was used to create a new painting of the Japanese abbot, which Zhongfeng Mingben then inscribed. This painting is now lost but a Muromachi-period copy of it still exists in the Rikkoku'an, Tōfuku temple in Kyoto.

Another way to paint someone's portrait was to sketch their likeness by copying his or her face from a faithful painting and then complete the figure and the setting from a stock repertoire thus creating a new painting. This seems to have been common practice, if we can trust the documentary value of an *emaki* painting of the first half of the fourteenth century, the *Zenshin Shōnin-e* 善信上人絵, in which





10

10

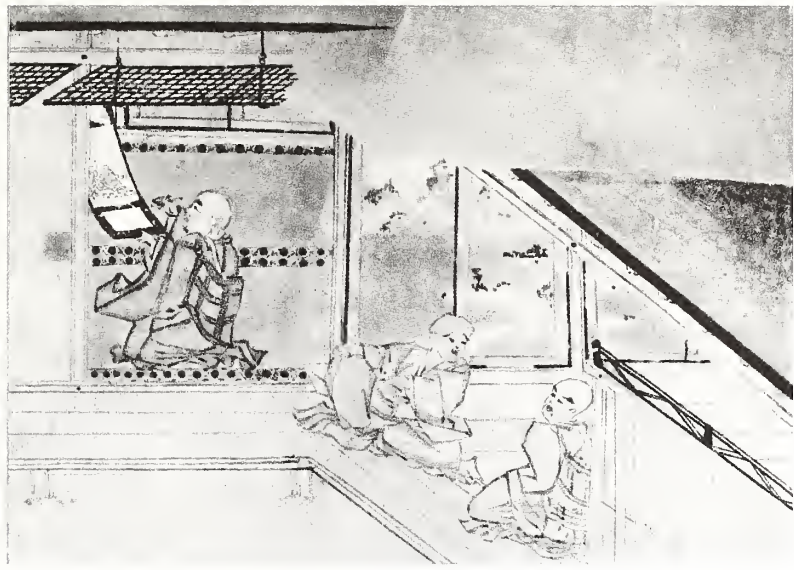
Anonymous, *Sketch of Haku'un Egyō*,  
unmounted leaf, ink on paper, 13.4 x  
9.3 cm. Rikkoku'an, Tōfukuji, Kyoto.

we see the founder of the Jōdo-Shinshū sect 浄土真宗, Shinran Shōnin 親鸞上人 (1173–1262), copying a portrait of his teacher Hōnen Shōnin 法然上人 (1133–1212) (fig.11).

By the Yuan dynasty, the practice of copying an original painting in various other media was already well established. Zhongfeng Mingben's portrait was first painted by his friend, the famous literati artist Zhao Mengfu, who also added an inscription in calligraphy. This fact and the text of the inscription were recorded in Zhao Mengfu's collected works and thus became widely known even to people who had never seen the original painting. Also during the Yuan period, the abbot's portrait was carved into a stone slab and Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy added next to the image, establishing a relationship between the image and the writing. Through rubbings, not only Zhao Mengfu's text but also the picture became available to a wider audience, including travelling monks from Japan and other faraway places. To the foreign monks, the image was important for its potent religious efficacy, not as a painting for its aesthetic and artistic merits. As long as the Chan master remained recognizable as Zhongfeng Mingben, it did not matter whether his likeness was reproduced as a woodblock print in an outdoor setting or taken from a stock repertoire. A print was cheap and many copies could be made. For the Chinese elite, the image was above all treasured as a work of art. Dong Qichang inscribed it because he considered the painting he had seen to be by Zhao Mengfu. Pan Gongshou copied it according to his own painting style and certainly was influenced by Qing notions of Zhao Mengfu's art.

Today, many paintings from the Yuan dynasty are lost and known only through texts and records. Quite a number of them, however, may still have survived in other media, such as rubbings or woodblock prints. In the past, connoisseurs of Chinese





11

11

Detail, Shinran Copying Honen's Portrait, *Zenshin Shonin-e*, ink and color on paper, height: 32 cm. Nishi-Hongan-ji, Kyoto.

painting, unlike connoisseurs of calligraphy, did not take these media seriously. They focused their studies on the paintings themselves, whether original or painted copies, and texts, such as inscriptions on paintings or records thereof in books. Because of this disregard for cheap, mass-produced prints and rubbings, this very useful material has been overlooked in the study of Chinese painting. The life of many a fine Yuan painting may still be retraced once this imbalance is redressed. As in Marsha Weidner's essay in this volume, I would like to draw attention to works of art in temples that are corporate property of the monastery. Such paintings rarely left the monastery to circulate in the art market. They were stored and used in the temple, as, for example, portraits of deceased abbots, which were taken out of storage and hung on his birthday. Such paintings lead a relatively secluded life. Of course they were recorded in the monastery's records and put on view on appropriate occasions. Such records, however, are mere lists that do not discuss paintings as works of art or comment on their aesthetic value. Only the monks and some distinguished visitors knew about their very existence. These paintings usually had a close connection with the monastery, its history, topography (like Wang Meng's *Great White Mountain Temple*) and eminent monks. They were not primarily treasured as works of art but for their content and function. Written records of monasteries, temple gazetteers, and personal notes of visitors, studied together with these long-neglected paintings, prints, and rubbings will surely provide a lively picture of the pictorial world of the Yuan dynasty.

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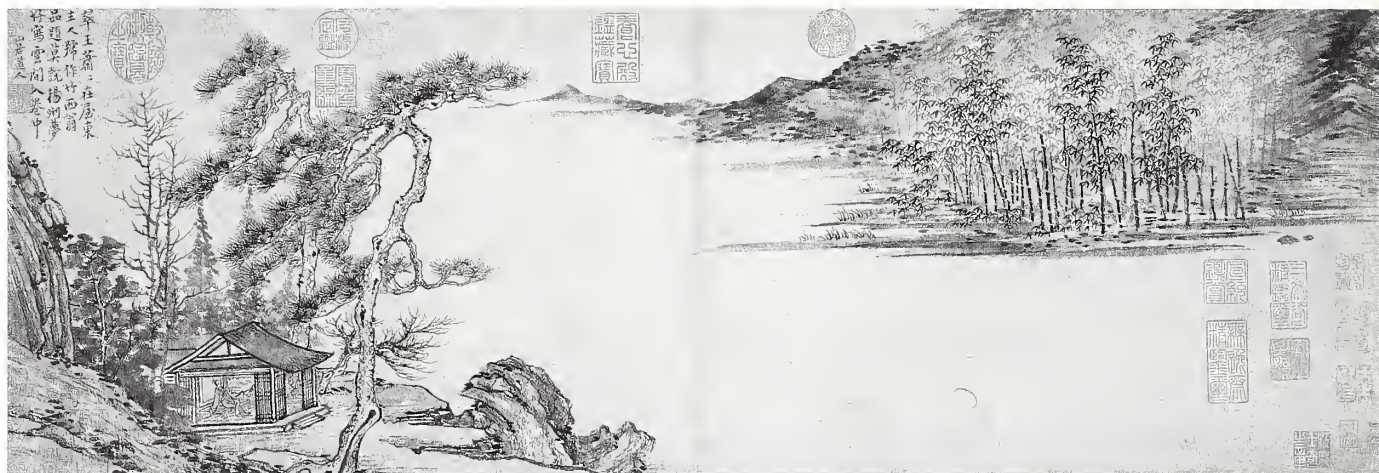
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## NOTES

- 1 Weidner Marsha, ed., *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).
- 2 Wang Meng, *Great White Mountain Temple*, handscroll, ink and color on paper, 28 x 670.3 cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum. See article by Qiu Ting 丘挺. “松涛云海摇空绿,” *Chinese Heritage* (中华贵产), no. 2 (October 2004): 122–25.
- 3 See Uta Lauer, “Man and the Mountain: Wen Boren’s Creation of Tianmushan,” *Oriental Art* 48, no. 2 (2002): 2–13.
- 4 *Songxue zhai wenji* 松雪齋文集, juan 10 (zan/inscriptions).
- 5 For a biography, see: *Yuan shu* 元書 91 下/1 下.
- 6 The local gazetteer *Songjiang fuzhi* 松江府志 in chapter 75 records the history of the temple and also mentions this image.







1A



1B

## FASHIONING IDENTITIES IN YUAN-DYNASTY PAINTING

### *Images of the Men of Culture*

1A, 1B

Zhang Wo (active ca. 1336–ca. 1364),  
*Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo*  
(*Zhuxi caotang tu*) with Zhao Yong  
frontispiece, ca. 1348–50, handscroll,  
ink on paper. Liaoning Provincial  
Museum, Shenyang. From *Zhongguo*  
*huihua quanji*, vol. 9, *Yuan 2* (Beijing  
1999), pls. 75 and 18.

### Abstract

The Yuan dynasty has long been understood as a major turning point in the history of Chinese painting. Twentieth-century art historians have described Yuan-dynasty painting as “supra-representational,” as “going beyond representation,” and as “self-expressive.” Are there other ways of understanding this watershed in the history of Chinese painting? Social changes may be as fundamental as stylistic ones in the interpretation of Yuan painting. This article examines two men, Yang Qian and Gu Dehui, and paintings created for them in order to see how they may have played a role in fashioning the identity of the man of culture, the *wenren*, in Yuan-dynasty painting and thereby setting the direction for the painting of the men of culture, *wenrenhua*, in later centuries.

THE YUAN DYNASTY has long been understood as a major turning point in the history of Chinese painting. Ming writers already remarked on the differences between the painting of the Southern Song and the Yuan.<sup>1</sup> In the twentieth century, Western scholars using the methods of art history have arrived at similar conclusions. As opposed to Song representational painting,<sup>2</sup> art historians have described Yuan painting as “supra-representational,” as “going beyond representation,” and as “self-expressive.”<sup>3</sup> Are there other ways of understanding this watershed in the history of Chinese painting? Another approach might be to ask if those who played a role in facilitating the creation of paintings participated in fashioning an identity for themselves in painting.<sup>4</sup>

A number of wealthy members of the elite who hosted poets and painters and presided at the creation of pictures are known from the mid-fourteenth century. Two stand out because paintings survive relating to both of them: Yang Qian 楊謙 (born 1283) of Songjiang 松江 and Gu Dehui 顧德輝 (1310–1369) of Kunshan 崑山. For Yang Qian there is Zhang Wo’s 張渥 (active ca. 1336–ca. 1364) depiction of Yang Qian’s retreat, entitled *Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo* (*Zhuxi caotang tu* 竹西草堂圖) (fig. 1),<sup>5</sup> and Wang Yi 王穉 (ca. 1333–ca. 1385) and Ni Zan’s 倪瓚 (1306–1374) *Small Portrait of Yang Zhuxi* (*Yang Zhuxi gaoshi xiaoxiang* 楊竹西高士小像) (fig. 2);<sup>6</sup> for Gu Dehui there is an anonymous portrait, *Small Portrait of the Laurel Man of the Way* (*Jiusu daoren xiaoxiang* 金粟道人小像) (fig. 7),<sup>7</sup> and Zhao Yuan’s 趙元(原) (active ca. 1350–ca. 1375) depiction of Gu Dehui’s retreat at Hexi, *Thatched Hut at Hexi* (*Hexi caotang tu* 合溪草堂圖) (fig. 9).<sup>8</sup> These paintings show that such men did participate in fashioning an identity for themselves. Further, the images relating to them reveal a change in the position of the educated man in the fourteenth century, a change that has implications for painting in the following Ming and Qing dynasties.



2

2

Wang Yi (ca. 1333–ca. 1385) and Ni Zan (1306–1374), *Portrait of Yang Qian*, ca. 1362, handscroll, ink on paper. Palace Museum, Beijing. From *Zhongguo huihua quanji*, vol. 9, *Yuan* 3 (Beijing 1999), pl. 31.

Although Yang Qian is recorded by Ming writers as one who entertained poets and painters, little is known of his life.<sup>9</sup> He was born at the very beginning of the Yuan dynasty in 1283 and lived his life in retirement at his family home at Zhangyan 張堰 in Songjiang. His death date is not recorded. The Yang clan had lived for generations in Songjiang, and it was said that Yang Qian was a distant descendant of Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53 BC — AD 18). As a recluse he was compared to the Song dynasty Ge Tianmin 葛天民 who had lived at West Lake and associated with the surpassing scholars of his day. Yang Qian adopted Pingshan 平山 and Zhuxi 竹西 as his *hao* (sobriquet). He was one of the wealthiest men of his time and place: He Liangjun 何良俊 (1506–1573), writing in the sixteenth century, compared his native Songjiang with Suzhou in terms of wealthy men and cited Yang Qian as one of them.<sup>10</sup> Yang Qian's Tower Not Obstructing the Cloudy Mountains (*Buai yunshan lou* 不礙雲山樓) — the name of the *lou* (tower) is taken from a line from the Tang dynasty poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) — was one of the spots on his estate in addition to the retreat associated with his *hao*, Zhuxi, West of the Bamboo. The litterateur Yang Weizhen 楊維禎 (1296–1370) wrote a record (*ji* 記) for the tower in 1349, and Bei Qiong 貝瓊 (ca. 1317–1379), a student of Yang Weizhen's, composed a second record for it in 1364.<sup>11</sup> Ma Wan 馬琬 (ca. 1310–ca. 1378), another student of Yang Weizhen, painted a landscape at the tower in 1349.<sup>12</sup> This suggests some of the literary figures, particularly those associated with Yang Weizhen, who moved in and out of Yang Qian's estate. He Liangjun notes that Songjiang was relatively peaceful during the last decades of the Yuan dynasty compared with neighboring Suzhou, particularly after Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321–1367) made Suzhou his capital in 1356 and the Suzhou region became a serious center of contention.<sup>13</sup> Litterateurs like Yang Weizhen found shelter in the homes of the Songjiang elite.

Yang Qian began to assemble literary and pictorial materials relating to his retreat amidst bamboo from which he derived his *hao*, Zhuxi, in the late 1340s. The sequence in which he obtained each part of what became a handscroll is not clear. The only dates appear in the colophons; these along with the death date of one of the inscribers, which provides a terminus ad quem of 1350, suggest dates for the major components of the scroll. The two characters *zhu* and *xi* written in seal script by Zhao Yong 趙雍 (1289–ca. 1360), the son of Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322),



appear at the beginning of the scroll. They may have been intended as the characters for the pediment inscription (*e* 額) of Yang Qian's retreat. Zhao Yong also painted a branch of bamboo and composed a poem, which he wrote out following his painting.

Zhang Wo's depiction of Yang Qian's retreat is the next major component of the scroll. Zhang Wo, who was known to his contemporaries as a figure painter, painted a landscape for Yang Qian. His solution to the problem of how to convey the meaning of Zhuxi was to depict Yang Qian seated in a pavilion looking out at a grove of bamboo. His composition opens with a view across water of a dense growth of bamboo. The bamboo is on a hillside that gradually recedes into the distance as the composition advances. Two large pine trees bring the view to the foreground where Yang Qian is depicted sitting in front of a screen inside an open pavilion with a hip and gable roof. He faces the bamboo grove as if deep in thought. Behind the pavilion there is the suggestion of another building nestled in the trees. The tall pines framing the pavilion along with other trees and the slope of a hill enclose the retreat separating it from the outside world. At some point Yang Yu 楊瑀 (1285–1361) inscribed a poem in the upper left corner of the painting.<sup>14</sup>

The painting is followed by a record (*zhi* 志) on the name Zhuxi composed and written out by Yang Weizhen. Yang Weizhen probably wrote this account in the spring of 1349 when he visited Yang Qian and composed his record for the Tower Not Obstructing the Cloudy Mountains. In his account, Yang Weizhen describes how several gentlemen visited him bringing Yang Qian's scroll with them. They all offered theories on the meaning of Zhuxi. Yang Weizhen listened to each of their theories and then put them all to shame with his simple and elegant derivation of the name; that it literally meant west of a grove of bamboo. He then states that Yang Qian came to him and requested that he write up the story of the various theories and his solution as a record for the pavilion. Yang Weizhen obliged and composed a song to go along with his account.<sup>15</sup>

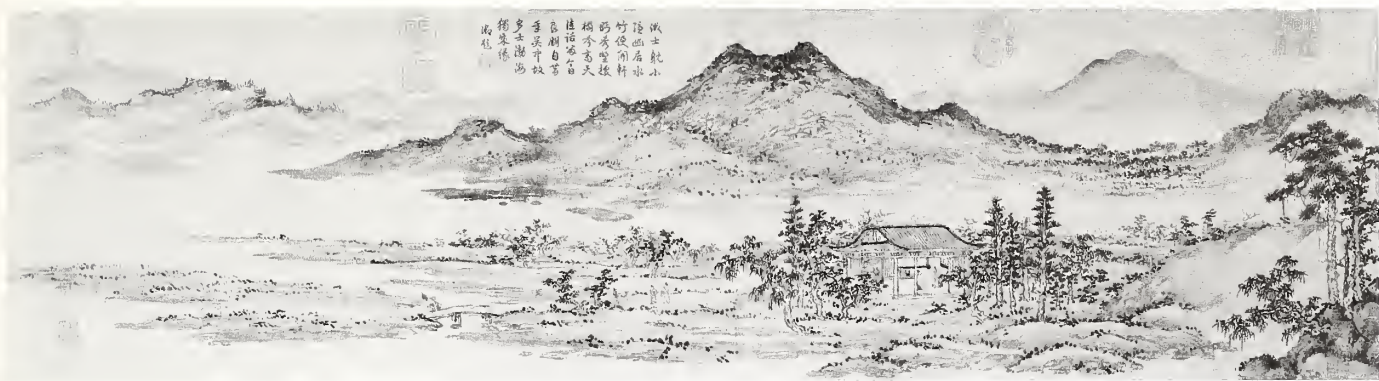
Following Yang Weizhen's account are inscriptions by Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283–1350), a close friend of Yang Weizhen; Shao Zhong 邵衷; Ma Wan; Zhao Su 趙橚, who was shown the scroll with Yang's record in 1355; Qian Weishan 錢維善, who also saw the scroll at the end of the same year; and Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (ca. 1316–ca. 1402). Yang Qian was thus able to commemorate in a single handscroll his place of retirement and his choice of *hao*. Through the handscroll he fashioned an identity for himself as a cultivated man living in retirement.

This assemblage celebrating Yang Qian's place of reclusion and choice of *hao* in handscroll format is not an isolated example among mid-fourteenth-century scrolls, although it is one of the most complete, comprising frontispiece, painting, record, and colophons. A certain Zhou Jing'an 周景安 of Wu assembled a simi-

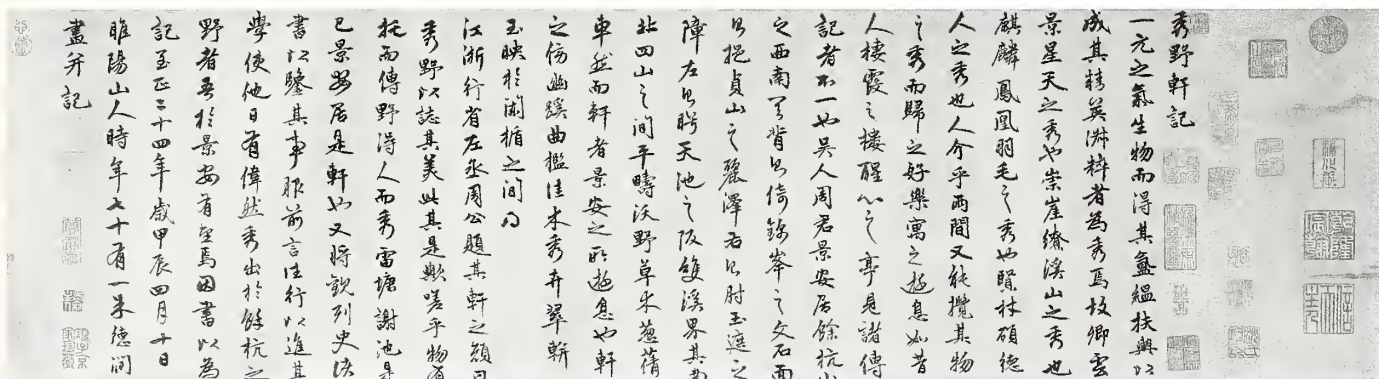
lar scroll for his studio, the Studio of Refined Wilds (Xiuye Xuan 秀野軒) (fig. 3). At Zhou Jing'an's request the official and painter Zhu Derun 朱德潤 (1294–1365) painted the image of the studio, which is dated to May 11, 1364.<sup>16</sup> Zhou Jing'an then asked Zhu Derun for a record of the studio, and Zhu Derun composed it and wrote it out following the painting. Zhou Jing'an had presumably already obtained the characters for the title of his studio written in seal script by the well-known calligrapher Zhou Boqi 周伯琦 (1298–1369).<sup>17</sup> As with Yang Qian's scroll, the characters are mounted as a frontispiece to the painting and the record. Starting a year after Zhu Derun completed the painting and the record, visitors to Zhou Jing'an's studio began to contribute poems to the scroll. They were written out following the record. Zhu Derun's depiction of the studio situates it in the midst of the wilds. It is a three-bay structure set back into the landscape. Two figures converse inside the building, and antiquities are prominently displayed at an open window. The scene opens out as the scroll is unrolled and concludes with a view of distant hills.

In terms of composition, the painting is similar to Zhang Wo's painting: the studio is sheltered in the landscape and juxtaposed against the distant, outside world. This similarity of composition suggests that the structure of these paintings held meaning. Both paintings show the place of retreat as an enclosed space with an opening to the world beyond the studio. There are few, if any, pre-fourteenth-century precedents for such an image. Yuan painters such as Zhang Wo and Zhu Derun created their paintings out of images associated with the Tang dynasty masters Wang Wei 王維 (699–759) and Lu Hong 盧鴻 (active mid-8th century), and with the Song dynasty painter Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1041–1106). Recensions of Wang Wei's *Wang Chuan Villa Painting* (*Wang Chuan tu* 輞川圖) and Lu Hong's *Ten Views from a Thatched Hut* (*Caotang shizhi* 草堂十志) were known in the late Northern Song and served as sources for Li Gonglin's depiction of his dwelling in the Longmian Mountains, *Mountain Villa* (*Longmian shanju tu* 龍眠山居圖).<sup>18</sup> All three pictures were known in some version in the Yuan period, and painters like Zhang Wo and Zhu Derun certainly drew on them in creating their own images of the place of reclusion. All three pictures were narrative in character, however, and closely tied to sequences of poems. The Yuan paintings were essentially new in concentrating on the place of reclusion and in combining the image with a record. Their composition expressed the dilemma of the recluse in formal terms: it is the juxtaposition of *chu* 出 and *chu* 處, emerging and withdrawing, two terms that derive from the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and are at the heart of whether to serve in government or remain in reclusion. Posing this fundamental question in formal terms was also new.

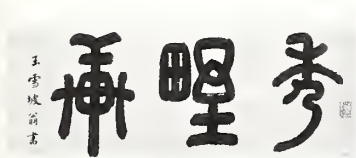
In the early 1360s when Yang Qian would have been close to eighty *sui* (years, including his birth year), and most likely to commemorate his birthday, he began to



3A



3B



3C

3A, 3B, 3C

Zhu Derun (1294–1365), *Studio of Refined Wilds* (*Xiuye xuan*), 1364, with Zhou Boqi frontispiece and Zhu Derun colophon, handscroll, ink and light color on paper. Palace Museum, Beijing. From *Zhongguo lidai huihua, Gugong bowuyuan canghua*, vol. 4 *Yuandai bufen* (Beijing, 1983), pl. 42 and p. 14.

assemble another scroll, this time a portrait scroll. A young portrait specialist from Hangzhou named Wang Yi painted the image of the venerable Yang Qian.<sup>19</sup> There is no record linking Wang Yi with Yang Qian other than the portrait, but Wang Yi, who would have been about thirty at the time, was well known as a portrait painter. Tao Zongyi, who was the last to add an inscription to Yang Qian's *Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo* scroll, preserved Wang Yi's text on the secrets of portrait painting (*Xiexiang jue* 寫像訣) in his *Zhuogeng lu* 輟耕錄. He considered Wang Yi a “*wangnian you* 忘年友,” a friend despite the differences in their ages. He had known Wang Yi from the time Wang Yi was a boy of twelve or thirteen studying the classics with the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) specialist Ye Guangju 葉廣居.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Tao Zongyi, who lived in Songjiang and is known from his colophon for *Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo* to have visited Yang Qian sometime after 1355, may have recommended Wang Yi. Otherwise Wang Yi's reputation for small portraits (*xiao xiang* 小像) had spread to Zhangyan in Songjiang. Wang Yi depicted Yang Qian in scholarly robes walking with a staff. He painted the image of Yang Qian in ink monochrome, gradually building up the face with small strokes. Wang Yi remarked in his text that he observed his subjects in relaxed circumstances in order to understand his subjects' true nature not just their outer appearance; he wanted to have the image of the person in his mind before starting to paint.<sup>21</sup> His approach is apparent in his depiction of Yang Qian.

After Wang Yi finished his portrait of Yang Qian, the litterateur Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 (1292–1364) wrote an inscription for it. The inscription is dated to 1362, when Yang would have been eighty *sui*, and refers to the Longevity Star appearing



bright over Mao River (Maoshui 洑水). It is the first date that can be associated with the portrait. The other Yuan-period inscriptions may have been added at the same time, and it is possible that they were all composed at one gathering, although none of them is dated. Following Zheng Yuanyou's inscription are ones by Yang Weizhen, Su Danian 蘇大年, Ma Wan, Gao Chun (Shun) 高淳, Qian Zi 錢鼎, a monk Jinghui 靜慧, Wang Feng 王逢 (1319–1388), and Mao Gu 茅穀. The next date associated with the portrait scroll is the following year, 1363. In that year Ni Zan added a landscape setting for the portrait image: he framed the figure with a pine tree and painted some rocks in the foreground. Then he inscribed the painting, naming Wang as the painter of the image and dating his inscription. It is possible that Zheng Yuanyou shortly thereafter wrote a frontispiece with the names of all of those who had participated in the scroll: a large seal reading “Record-seal of prized enjoyment of Mr. Zheng of Siming” (Siming Zheng shi zhenwan shuji 四明鄭氏珍玩書記) appears under the title.<sup>22</sup> Yang Qian had thus fashioned an image of himself at the age of eighty in the form of a collective handscroll with a frontispiece, a portrait, and nine inscriptions.

According to seventeenth-century recordings of the scroll, there were a few sprigs of bamboo at the beginning of the painting. Wu Sheng 吳升 (d. ca. 1712) in his *Daguanlu* 大觀錄 suggests that they may have been painted by Yang Qian himself.<sup>23</sup> It is just possible that the sprigs of bamboo may have been lost in a subsequent remounting: at the beginning of the painting there is half of a Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1522–1590) seal affording a few centimeters, now lost, where the bamboo may have been. If the sprigs of bamboo were there originally, Yang Qian would have been positioned between bamboo and pine, allowing him to be framed between two such highly allusive plants, exactly as in Zhang Wo's *Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo*.

The special character of this image becomes clear when it is examined against the choices available to Yang Qian. Another portrait of a scholar by one of the best-known fourteenth-century portrait masters active in Hangzhou in the generation before Wang Yi survives. It is the portrait of the Korean scholar Yi Che-hyon 李齊賢 (Li Qixian), now preserved in the National Museum, Seoul (fig. 4).<sup>24</sup> Yi Che-hyon visited Hangzhou in 1319 and had his portrait done by Chen Jianru 陳鑑如 (active early 14th century), who came from a family of portrait specialists.<sup>25</sup> Chen Jianru depicted Yi seated formally in a lacquer folding chair with a table behind him. The image is in hanging scroll format and executed in ink and color on silk. It is a type of formal seated portrait that is best known through Song dynasty imperial portraits and through the Song and Yuan portraits of Chan prelates, now mostly preserved in Japan. In composition and in detail of execution, it is similar to the portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1264–1325) by Yi'an 一庵, a portrait taken to Japan around 1315.<sup>26</sup> The conventions of secular and religious portraiture



4

4  
Chen Jianru (active early 14th century), *Portrait of Yi Che-hyon*, 1319, hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. National Museum, Seoul. From *Sekai bijutsu daizenshū, Tōyō hen*, vol. 7 *Gen* (Tokyo, 1997), pl. 115.

are close: both sitters are shown seated in three-quarter pose in curving-back, lacquer chairs. Yi Che-hyon is identified as a scholar as opposed to a Chan prelate by his clothing—he is wearing identical scholarly garb to Yang Qian—and by the objects placed on the table behind him: a zither (*qin* 琴), a bronze tripod (*ding* 鼎), and a copy of the *Zhou Yi* 周易. His legs are pendant rather than being folded on the chair in a position of meditation as seen in the portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben.

Other types of formal portraits available to Yang Qian were full-length standing portraits and bust portraits. The standing portraits are known from Song imperial portraits and Yuan images used for religious purposes, such as the *Portrait of Zhao Ding, Duke of Fengguo* 趙鼎像 painted around 1331.<sup>27</sup> The bust portraits are best known through the imperial portraits of Yuan emperors and empresses, but they existed for earlier rulers and cultural figures, as well, as seen in the Yuan printed edition of *Pictures of Scholars and Officials of Successive Dynasties* (*Lidai junchen tu xiang* 歷代君臣圖像).<sup>28</sup> The full-length standing images were executed as hanging scrolls as opposed to the bust portraits, which were in album format. A more personal type of formal bust portrait existed in handscroll format as seen in the Song-period image of the scholar and statesman Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086). It was painted as the frontispiece to a scroll containing the document appointing Sima as Chancellor of the Left.<sup>29</sup> In the late fourteenth century, such an image was created for Yang Weizhen and circulated among his friends and acquaintances shortly after his death in 1370. In it, he is depicted in three-quarter view in ink and light color on paper; the first dated colophon corresponds to 1372.<sup>30</sup>



5A



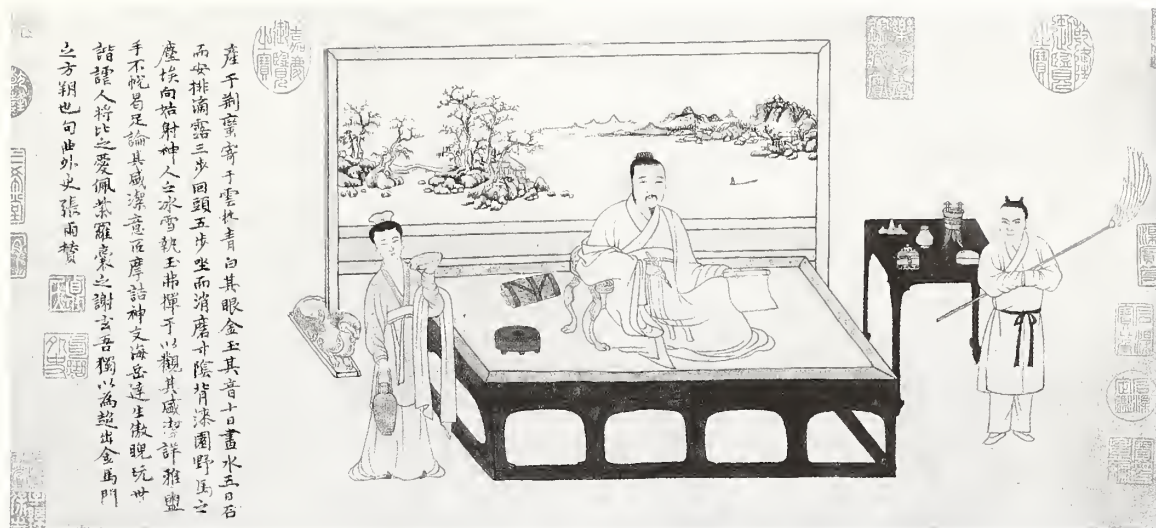
5B

5A, 5B

Attributed to Chen Zhitian (active mid-14th century), *Portraits of Wu Quanjie*, detail, Yuan or Ming dynasty, handscroll, ink and color on silk. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. From *Bosuton bijutsukan shiho: Chugoku Sogenga meihinten* (Nara, 1996), no. 70.

These types of portraits, along with other alternatives representing a further range of portrait types available to Yang Qian, are preserved in a handscroll attributed to Chen Jianru's son, Chen Zhitian 陳芝田 (active mid-14th c.), who, like his father, was active in Hangzhou. The scroll appears to be a copy taken from several handscrolls that themselves preserved copies of portraits of the Daoist master Wu Quanjie 吳全節 (1269–1346) (fig. 5).<sup>31</sup> The original scrolls had been commissioned by Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) from Chen Zhitian in 1330 and again in 1337 in order to record in small scale the portraits of Wu Quanjie that documented important moments in Wu Quanjie's life, covering the period from the late thirteenth century through 1331. According to Yu Ji's prefaces to the scrolls, there were originally nineteen images in two or possibly three scrolls; the present scroll preserves fourteen of the portraits along with the texts of their original inscriptions. None of the names of the portrait masters of the original paintings are recorded. In one case—an image of Wu Quanjie in quiet sitting—Zhao Mengfu is recorded as having painted the setting, thus creating a collaborative picture similar to Wang Yi and Ni Zan's portrait of Yang Qian (fig. 8). What is remarkable is the range of portrait images: in addition to the formal seated and standing portraits there are circular bust portraits and informal portraits of Wu Quanjie in landscape settings listening to the wind in the pines and visiting Mount Heng. Since all of the original paintings have been reduced to the size of a handscroll, the scale of the originals is unclear. Most of them appear to have been hanging scrolls, however, and, like Chen Jianru's formal seated portrait of Yi Che-hyon, to have been executed in ink and color on silk with the inscriptions written on the surface of the painting. Only the circular busts and perhaps some of the standing images of Wu Quanjie may have been small in scale similar to Wang Yi's depiction of Yang Qian.





6

6  
Anonymous, *Portrait of Ni Zan*  
Inscribed by Zhang Yu, ca. 1340,  
handscroll, ink and color on paper.  
National Palace Museum, Taipei.  
From *Gugong tuxiang xuancui*  
(Taipei, 1971), pl. 37.

Wang Yi was known for his small portraits (*xiao xiang*), and in his portrait of Yang Qian, he drew on a tradition that went back to at least the Northern Song period, as is evidenced by the *Five Old Men of Suiyang* 睢陽五老圖, a mid-eleventh-century handscroll in which each of the Five Old Men was depicted in small scale in ink and color against a plain ground. During the fourteenth century this scroll was owned by the family of Zhu Derun, a descendant of one of the Five Old Men, in neighboring Kunshan.<sup>32</sup> An unknown contemporary of Wang Yi followed the conventions of this scroll in depicting four of the most famous Confucian scholars of the Yuan period. Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249–1333), Yu Ji, Ouyang Xuan 歐陽玄 (1283–1357), and Jie Xisi 揭傒斯 (1274–1344) are each shown standing against a blank ground in three-quarter view. They appear as if walking, and both Wu Cheng and Yu Ji carry staffs similar to Yang Qian.<sup>33</sup> The lineament is the thin, iron-wire-like line associated with the tradition of *baimiao* 白描, or plain drawing, stemming from Li Gonglin and the circle of late Northern Song literati around Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) but with the addition of light color.<sup>34</sup> Wang Yi kept to the *baimiao* tradition creating his portrait of Yang Qian in ink monochrome. In the early Yuan period, Zhao Mengfu had used this type of ink-monochrome depiction for culture heroes such as Du Fu and Su Shi himself.<sup>35</sup>

Yang Qian's portrait thus differs from the formal types of portrait whether seated, standing, or bust image. It comes closest to the images executed in the *baimiao* tradition and has the same allusions to the world of the Northern Song literati, but it differs from them in that it is a collective work in a handscroll format centering on one man. As assembled by the venerable Yang Qian, it is an intimate scroll that conveys him in images and in words. In this respect it is similar to the depiction of Ni Zan in handscroll format with an inscription by Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283–1350) now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 6).<sup>36</sup> The portrait of Ni is executed in ink and light color on paper. Ni is shown seated on a couch holding a brush and a sheet of paper as if about to write or paint. He is flanked by two servants, and as in the portrait of Yi Che-hyon, he is identified by props: there is even a similar table with objects placed to his left. Yang Qian, however, is painted without color and without scholar's objects to support his status in what is essentially a new type of portrait for a living scholar. His image relies on the allusions associated

with rock and pine, and possibly bamboo, to convey his character as a scholar in retirement. Through his scrolls Yang Qian thus emerges as a man of culture who fashioned an identity for himself through his support of painters and litterateurs.

The case of Gu Dehui is similar, although Gu Dehui appears to have played a more direct role in fashioning his image. Much more is known about Gu Dehui's life than about Yang Qian's.<sup>37</sup> Gu Dehui wrote his own tomb inscription in 1358, and after his death a close friend named Yin Kui 殷奎 wrote another epitaph for him. These accounts provide a basic biography. In addition, two fascicles of his collected works, *Rough Drafts of Jade Mountain* (*Yushan pugao* 玉山璞稿), survive, documenting the years 1354 and 1355, and there are two important collections of poems and prose records composed at his Jade Mountain estate in Kunshan. Both were assembled and edited by Gu Dehui: *Surpassing Scenery of Jade Mountain Collection* (*Yushan mingsheng ji* 玉山名勝集) includes the prose accounts, prefaces, and poems composed at individual sites at his Beautiful Spot at Jade Mountain (*Yushan jiachu* 玉山佳處), while the *Elegant Collection from the Thatched Hut at Jade Mountain* (*Yushan caotang yaji* 玉山草堂雅集) is organized by author with a short biography of each. These collections document his life and his relationships with his contemporaries.

Gu Dehui was born in 1310 into an old family that had lived in Kunshan for generations. They claimed descent from Gu Yewang 顧野王 of the Chen dynasty (557–589). Gu Dehui's great-grandfather and grandfather had both been officials under the Song and at the beginning of the Yuan, but his father had not served in government. Rather he had remained in Kunshan calling himself the "Retired Scholar of Jade Mountain" (*Yushan chushi* 玉山處士). As a teenager Gu Dehui gave up his studies to manage the family properties and business interests and appears to have been quite successful. At the same time he enjoyed local status as something of a swordsman (*xia* 俠). When he was about thirty he returned to his studies and began to use his wealth to collect antiquities, calligraphy, and painting and to build an extensive retreat in the western part of his property. By the second half of the 1340s, figures of national reputation were visiting Gu Dehui's Beautiful Spot at Jade Mountain. Although he had not sought official appointment, during the 1350s he was recruited several times by the Yuan government. He consistently declined office, although some duties were inescapable. In 1356 just after Zhang Shicheng had come into the Wu region, he fled with his aging mother to property in Jiaying. His mother died there, necessitating his return to bury her, and once back in Kunshan he had to rebuff overtures to serve in Zhang Shicheng's government. He did this by shaving his head and tending his mother's grave. It was at this time that he built his own tomb mound, planted a species of laurel tree around it, and began to call himself the Laurel Man of the Way (*Jinsu daoren* 金粟道人). It was



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7  
Anonymous copy, *Small Portrait of the Laurel Man of the Way*, ca. 1358, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper. Private collection, New York.

at this time, too, that he composed his own epitaph. He survived the last decade of the rebellions that led to the founding of the Ming dynasty, but died in 1369 in exile from Kunshan. Because his son had been an official under the Yuan, he was exiled along with his son to the devastated region of northern Anhui from which Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328–1398), the Ming founder, had come. The hardships were too much for him.

After Gu Dehui began to call himself Laurel Man of the Way in 1356, he had a portrait made, probably by a portrait specialist (fig. 7). Ni Zan, who had added the rock and pine to Yang Qian's portrait, inscribed the painting in 1358. The portrait has been recorded as both a self-portrait and as a work by Ni Zan, although Gu Dehui is not known to have painted and Ni Zan is not known as a portrait painter.<sup>38</sup> The image is known now in two versions: a rubbing and a painting.<sup>39</sup> The painting, a hanging scroll executed in ink and light color on paper, appears to be a close copy of the original portrait. The lineament is the thin, iron-wire line of the *baimiao* tradition with the addition of color. Gu Dehui is shown seated on a rock dais with his right leg extended and his left leg tucked under him. He wears a broad brimmed hat and a loose gown and holds a bird-feather fan in his right hand. To his right the rock forms a natural table, supporting a book. In front of him there is a footstool-like stone with his empty left shoe. Behind him, a banana palm frames his seated figure.

The title of the painting, "Small Portrait of the Laurel Man of the Way" (*Jinsu daoren xiaoxiang* 金粟道人小像), is written in seal script in the upper right corner



above the banana tree. Immediately to the left is Gu Dehui's own inscription, a quatrain in seven-character verse:

I wear a Confucian gown, a Buddhist hat, and a Daoist's shoes;  
Anywhere in the world, under a green hill, my bones may be buried.  
If you ask me where heroes formerly used to gather,  
They rode by the five mounds and in the streets of Luoyang.<sup>40</sup>

In his poem, Gu Dehui clearly fashions an image of himself around 1356: he is the embodiment of the syncretism of The Three Teachings (*Sanjiao heyi* 三教合一) while at the same time alluding to his youthful days when he emulated the wandering *xia* (swordsmen) of the Han period. His self-image is complemented by Ni Zan's inscription to the left:

If one says that this is a man who is interested in worldliness, the truth is he  
sings, plays the zither, and intones the ancients' books.  
If one says that he is indifferent to worldly affairs, the truth is he expands his  
family business and increases the size of his dwellings.  
The fame of his blissful life and estates has reached the capital.  
Suddenly he puts himself outside the world of affairs and rides a boat among  
the Five Lakes.  
His original nature is sanctioned by the bright moon; his body is one with  
the great void.  
Isn't he a man who wished to unify mystic wisdom in one and to penetrate  
the way of Confucius?

Ni Zan speaks to Gu Dehui's cultural attainments and his business acumen both of which have led to the "fame of his blissful life and estates." Ni Zan also speaks directly to the changes that have led Gu Dehui to assume the role of the Laurel Man of the Way.

The portrait conveys Gu Dehui in this role through its allusions. The same range of portrait types available to Yang Qian was also available to Gu Dehui. Gu Dehui is not portrayed in a formal seated portrait like Yi Che-hyon nor in a formal standing or bust image. He is depicted in an image that evokes scholars seated under trees and specifically alludes to paintings of Luohan, the ascetics of the Buddhist tradition. Images of scholars seated under trees had a long history going back to the late Han period and the Southern Dynasties.<sup>41</sup> Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–ca. 406) had painted Xie Kun 謝鯤 (280–322) amidst the hills and valleys, and in the early Yuan period Zhao Mengfu had painted this subject matter in a handscroll showing Xie



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Attributed to Chen Zhitian (active mid-14th century), *Portraits of Wu Qianjie*, detail of section 5, Yuan or Ming dynasty, handscroll, ink and color on silk. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. From *Bosuton bijutsukan shiho: Chugoku Sogenga meihinten* (Nara, 1996), no. 70.

Kun under trees in a landscape.<sup>42</sup> Two of the portrait compositions preserved in the scroll of copies of portraits of Wu Qianjie show the use of overhanging pines as a framing device. One entitled “Looking at the Waterfall” shows Wu Qianjie seated on a rock at a table playing a *qin* (zither) under a pine tree. There are two cranes dancing in the foreground; the waterfall is in the distance. According to the inscription, the scene depicts Wu Qianjie during the first decade of the fourteenth century when he had been sent to the south to recruit scholars and visited Mount Lu and its famous waterfall. The second portrait in particular comes close to the portrait of Gu Dhui; it shows Wu Qianjie wearing scholarly robes seated in meditation on a rock dais (fig. 8). He holds a *ruyi* scepter in his hands, and is again framed by an overhanging pine tree. There is a crane dancing in the foreground. This is the portrait of Wu in quiet sitting in which, according to the inscription, the pine, the rock seat, and the crane had been painted in the original by Zhao Mengfu. The image represents Wu Qianjie when he was at the Yuan court discoursing on the way of the Celestial Master during the Yuanyou period (1314–1320). Emperor Renzong (r. 1311–1320) had invited him to the capital and built a retreat for him within the palace. It was there that he went for quiet sitting. The original encomium for the painting was written by Yu Ji. A surviving portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben meditating under a pine tree shows how popular this type of portrait was among the religious community.<sup>43</sup>

References to Luohan paintings in Gu Dhui’s portrait are found particularly in images of the twelfth Luohan, Nagasena. In some sets of Luohan paintings, Nagasena is shown backed by a banana palm and seated in a half-lotus position with one leg extended as in Gu Dhui’s portrait. Other images of Luohan show exactly the tabletop outcropping and the banana tree seen in Gu Dhui’s portrait.<sup>44</sup> The placement of a book on the rock table in Gu Dhui’s portrait is similar to the use of scholarly accoutrements seen in the portrait of Yi Che-hyon and in the *Portrait of Ni Zan* inscribed by Zhang Yu. The composition and choice of elements in Gu

Dehui's portrait thus carefully support him in his role of a man who wears "a Confucian robe, a Buddhist hat, and a Daoist's shoes." As with the syncretism of the Three Teachings, it is a syncretic pictorial image.

Gu Dehui, like Yang Qian, also assembled scrolls depicting the various retreats at his Beautiful Spot at Jade Mountain.<sup>45</sup> None of these scrolls is known to survive, but a depiction of his retreat at Hexi in Jiaying where he fled with his mother in 1356 does survive (fig. 9). It was painted by Zhao Yuan, a painter who frequented Jade Mountain during the 1350s and early 1360s, and was inscribed by Gu Dehui at Jade Mountain in 1363. Gu Dehui wrote the following poem and postface:

The Thatched Hall is determined by divination to be built on the banks of  
Hexi;  
Bamboo and trees, tangled and silent, darken ten acres.  
Earth forces come from the south, dividing the beauty of the wild;  
Water noises go to the south — the sound of the tide.  
At the gate there are no petty officials arriving to press for taxes;  
In seats there are poets intoning to wine.  
To go back and forth is still done only by boat;  
To use a picture to seek such scenery is to turn away from the search for a  
hidden spot.  
I like Hexi. There is much water and the wilds are extensive and it cannot be  
reached except by boat. It is truly a place for retirement; thus I have built a  
retreat in order to live in solitude. Shanchang [Zhao Yuan] by doing this pic-  
ture has really captured this scenery; therefore I have inscribed it to record  
this. The islet in the middle of the lake has Tide-Sound Cottage where [the  
monk] Chong Xinghai lives. On the Winter Solstice of the *guimao* year of the  
Zhizheng reign [1363], the Laurel Man of the Way, Gu Aying wrote this at the  
Thatched Hut at Jade Mountain, testing a brush of Wen Zijing.

To the right of Gu Dehui's inscription are Zhao Yuan's title and dedication, written in seal script: "Picture of the Thatched Hut at Hexi done for the Master of Jade Mountain by Zhao Yuan of Jucheng."

Zhao Yuan's depiction shows the Thatched Hut at Hexi, a three-bay structure in the lower right foreground, from a bird's-eye view. The building is framed by a group of tall trees and one leafless tree growing from an earthen bank in the immediate foreground. A boat is moored at the shore, and an expanse of water indicated by water fowl and three fishing skiffs stretches into the distance. On the far shore there is a boat landing, and a few trees obscure a structure. Gu Dehui's inscription makes the scene specific: the sense of isolation and distance is indicated by the pres-





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Zhao Yuan (active ca. 1350–ca. 1375), *The Thatched Hut at Hexi*, ca. 1363, hanging scroll, ink on paper. Shanghai Museum, Shanghai. From *Zhongguo huihua quanji*, vol. 8, Yuan 2 (Beijing 1999), pl. 149.

ence of boats while the islet with the Tide-Sound Cottage is the only link to the outside world. The composition is thus similar to Zhang Wo's depiction of Yang Qian's Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo and to Zhu Derun's depiction of the Studio of Refined Wilds and carries the same meaning by expressing the dilemma of going out or remaining in seclusion in formal terms. Zhao Yuan has converted the conventions of the handscrolls into a hanging scroll. He has written the title in seal script as if it was the frontispiece, and Gu Dehui's poem and postface become the equivalent of the record and colophons. As with his portrait, Gu Dehui has played an active role in shaping how the image is to be understood, reinforcing the image of himself as a scholar in seclusion from the world.

Both Yang Qian and Gu Dehui manipulated visual and verbal means to fashion identities for themselves. Their portraits refashion traditional portrait types into essentially new forms; the images of their thatched huts follow a new mode for the way in which a scholar in retreat can be depicted. They are seen as cultured men of letters associated with litterateurs and artists; they are men accomplished in more than one of the arts of poetry, calligraphy, and painting. That there was something new about this identity was already noted in the succeeding Ming dynasty. The sixteenth-century literary critic Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) wrote in his *Thicket of Poetry* (*Shisou* 詩藪):

Before the Song dynasty, poets, belletrists, calligraphers, and painters were such individually. Although there were those who combined these strengths,

they were not more than one or two. In the previous [Yuan] dynasty, there were few belletrists who were not capable in poetry and among the poets hardly any who were not skilled at calligraphy, and who, moreover, often extended this to include painting. And this situation did not exist in earlier periods.<sup>46</sup>

The twentieth-century historian of Chinese literature Yoshikawa Kōjirō has also observed a similar social phenomenon.<sup>47</sup> He has seen the emergence of the *wenren* 文人, the man of culture of the later Chinese tradition, as occurring in the mid-fourteenth century and has defined the new type of man in the writing and style of life of Yang Weizhen who was involved in both of Yang Qian's scrolls and was a close associate of Gu Dehui, participating in and helping to define the nature of the elegant gatherings held at Gu Dehui's Jade Mountain estate. In Yoshikawa's definition the *wenren* (man of culture) placed literature and the arts above philosophical and political affairs.

These social changes have been attributed to the conditions of Mongol rule in China.<sup>48</sup> The generation born after the Mongol conquest faced the challenge of accommodating to overlords who did not value traditional culture. Even after the examination system was reinstituted in 1315, the Chinese educated elite were frustrated in the pursuit of government careers. Men like Yang Qian and Gu Dehui chose not to participate. They remained on their estates and sought the company of like-minded men and in so doing set new patterns that could be followed in later periods under very different conditions. The scrolls that they assembled helped to define their way of life. They document the emergence of new patterns, new identities, for the educated elite and show how the identity of the *wenren*, the man of culture, could be fashioned through the creation of pictorial images. The scrolls reveal how the *wenren* as a type unfolded in the fourteenth century. The increasing incidence of men like Yang Qian and Gu Dehui in later centuries is one of the main factors in the flowering of *wenrenhua* 文人畫, the painting of the men of culture, in the Ming and Qing periods.

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## NOTES

Portions of this paper were first presented at an international conference in commemoration of Professor Frederick W. Mote held at National Central University in Taiwan.

- 1 See He Liangjun, *Siyu zhai congshuo* 四友齋叢說 (1569) (Collected writings of the Studio of the Four Friends), Yuan Ming shiliao biji congan 元明史料筆記叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 29, 263; and Dong Qichang, *Rongtai ji* 容臺集 (1630) (Taipei: Guoli Zhongyang tushuguan, 1968), *bieji* 別集 6.4a–5b.
- 2 See particularly the writings of Max Loehr: “Some Fundamental Issues in the History of Chinese Painting,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 2 (1964): 185–93; *Chinese Painting After Sung* (Ryerson Lecture, Yale Art Gallery, March 2, 1967); and “Phases and Content in Chinese Painting,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Chinese Painting* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1970), 285–97.
- 3 Wen C. Fong, “Introduction: The Great Tradition” and chapter 3, “The Yüan Dynasty: The Rise of Self-Expression,” in Wen C. Fong et al., *Images of the Mind: Selections from the Edward L. Elliott Family and John B. Elliott Collections of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting at the Art Museum, Princeton University* (Princeton: Art Museum, 1984), 2–19 and 94–129; and Fong, *Beyond Representation: Chinese Painting and Calligraphy 8th–14th Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 3–11 and 431–500.
- 4 On fashioning identities, see *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000). The starting point for the authors in the volume is Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). The relationships between artists and those who facilitated the creation of paintings — their patrons — have been discussed by James Cahill in “Types of Artist-Patron Relationships in Chinese Painting,” in *Artists and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting*, ed. Chu-tsing Li (Lawrence, Kans.: Kress Foundation Department of Art History, 1989), 7–20; and Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
- 5 Zhang Wo's depiction of the Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo is now in the collection of the Liaoning Provincial Museum. See *Qinggong sanyi guobao teji, huihua juan* 清宮散佚國寶特集·繪畫卷 (Special collection of national treasures dispersed from the Qing palace, painting volume) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 353–62. During the Qing dynasty it was in the palace collection and was catalogued as a painting by Zhao Yong (1289–ca. 1360). See *Shiqu baoji xubian* 石渠寶笈續編 (1793) (Treasure boxes of the Stone Moat, sequel), in *Bidian zhulin Shiqu baoji hebian* 秘殿珠林石渠寶笈合編 (Pearl forest of the Secret Hall, treasure boxes of the Stone Moat, combined edition) (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1988), 4, 991–94. Before entry into the Qing Palace, it was recorded by Li Rihua, *Liuyanzhai biji* 六研齋筆記 (Miscellaneous notes of the Six Inkstones Studio) (ca. 1635; 1768 ed.), 1.12a ff.; Bian Yongyu, *Shigutang shuhua huikao* (1682) 式古堂書畫彙考 (Compilation of writings on calligraphy and painting from the Shigu Hall), in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, ed. Lu Fusheng, vol. 7 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1994), 46–48 (hereafter cited as ZSQ, vol. 7); Gu Fu, *Pingsheng zhuangguan* (1692) 平生狀觀 (Great sights [of calligraphy and painting] of my life) (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1962) 9.95; and Gao Shiqi,



- Jiangcun shuhua mu* (1705) 江村書畫目 (Jiangcun's catalogue of calligraphy and painting), in *ZSQ*, vol. 7, 1074. Li Rihua misidentified Yang Zhuxi as Yang Yu (1285–1361), author of *Shanju xinhua*, rather than as Yang Qian, causing much confusion in later centuries. The confusion originated from Yang Yu's poetic inscription on Zhang Wo's scroll. Gu Fu recognized the work as by Zhang Wo while Gao Shiqi followed Li Rihua in cataloguing the painting as by Yang Yu.
- 6 The Wang Yi and Ni Zan portrait is now in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. See *Zhongguo lidai huihua: Gugong Bowuyuan canghua* 中國歷代繪畫：故宮博物院藏畫 (Chinese paintings of successive dynasties: Selection of paintings collected by the Palace Museum), vol. 4 *Yuandai bufen* 元代部分 (Yuan dynasty part) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1983), pls. 72–74, *fulu*, 20–21. During the Qing dynasty the painting remained in private hands and only entered the collection of the Palace Museum after 1949. It is recorded in various seventeenth- and eighteenth-century catalogues. See, for example, Wang Keyu, *Shanhuwang minghua tiba* (1648) 珊瑚網名畫題跋 (Coral net: Inscriptions and colophons on famous paintings), in *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu*, ed. Lu Fusheng, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1992), 1081–82; Bian Yongyu, *Shigutang shuhua huikao* (1682) in *ZSQ*, vol. 7, 122–23; and Wu Sheng, *Daguan lu* (1712) 大觀錄 (Record of wonderful sights [of calligraphy and painting], *Yishu shangjian xuanzhen* (Taipei: Hanhua, 1970), pp. 2233–37. For a recent study of the painting, see Ebine Toshio, “Ōtaku Geisan hitsu Yō Chikusei shōzōzu kan” 王繹倪瓚筆楊竹西小像圖卷 (The small portrait handscroll of Yang Zhuxi by Wang Yi and Ni Zan), *Kokka* 1255 (2000): 37–39.
  - 7 The painting, formerly in the Ogawa Collection, Kyoto, is now in a private collection, New York. See David A. Sensabaugh, “Life at Jade Mountain: Notes on the Life of the Man of Letters in Fourteenth-Century Wu Society,” in *Suzuki Kei sensei kanreki kinin: Chugoku kaigashi ronshu* 鈴木敬先生還曆記念：中國繪畫史論集 (Collected essays on the history of Chinese painting in honor of Professor Suzuki Kei's sixtieth birthday) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1981), frontispiece. The painting has been recorded as both a self-portrait and as a work by Ni Zan.
  - 8 The painting is in the collection of the Shanghai Museum. See *Zhongguo huihua quanji* 中國繪畫全集 (Comprehensive collection of Chinese paintings), vol. 8 *Yuan 2* (Yuan dynasty, vol. 2) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1999), pl. 149.
  - 9 For biographical sources, see *Yuanren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 元人傳記資料索引 (Index of biographical materials of Yuan figures), ed. Wang Deyi et al. (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1979–82), 1534. I have incorporated information from Zheng Yuanyou's poem attached to the *Small Portrait of Yang Zhuxi* in the biographical sketch that follows.
  - 10 He Liangjun, *Siyoushai congshuo*, 16.136.
  - 11 Yang Weizhen, “Buai yunshan lou ji” 不礙雲山樓記 (Record of the Tower Not Obstructing the Cloudy Mountains), in *Dongweizi wenji* 東維子文集 (Literary collection of Master Dongwei), Sibū congkan (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1929), 19.13b–14b. Ebine Toshio gives the 1364 date for Bei Qiong's record but does not cite a source. Bei Qiong's record is mentioned in *Songjiang fu zhi* (1818) 松江府志 (Gazetteer of Songjiang prefecture), 50.44a, but neither the text nor the date is recorded. See *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu, Huazhong difang* 中國方志叢書，華中地方 (Library of Chinese local gazetteers, Central China area), vol. 10, pt. 2 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1970), 1125. Sun Chengze (1592–1676) records a painting of the Buai yunshan lou by Zhao Yong (1289–ca. 1360) with a Yang Weizhen record and colophons by Ma Wan and others. See his *Gengzi xiaoxia ji* 庚子消夏記 (1660) (Record of whiling away the summer of the gengzi year), *Yishu shangjian xuanzhen xuji* (Taipei: Hanhua, 1971), 349. Dong Ji wrote an undated poem for the lou. See his *Xijiao xiaoduan ji* 西郊笑端集 (Laughs from the western suburbs), *Siku quanshu zhenben erji* (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1971), 1.61a.
  - 12 The painting is now in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei. See *Gugong shuhua tulu* 故宮書畫圖錄 (Illustrated catalogue of calligraphy and painting in the National Palace Museum), vol. 5 (Taipei: Guoli Gugong Bowuyuan, 1990), 93–94. For biographical materials on Ma Wan, see Chen Gaohua, *Yuandai huajia shiliao huibian* 元代畫家史料彙編 (Compilation of historical materials of Yuan dynasty painters) (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2004), 662–69.
  - 13 He Liangjun, *Siyoushai congshuo*, 16, 136.
  - 14 The presence of Yang Yu's poem presumably led to the confusion of Yang Qian with Yang Yu, as noted above.
  - 15 Yang Weizhen's record, “Zhuxi zhi” 竹西志, appears in his collected works as “Zhuxi ting zhi” 竹西亭志. See *Dongweizi wenji* 22.5b–6b. Although the painting has been transmitted under the title “Thatched Hut West of the Bamboo,” Yang Weizhen does not mention the building in the title of the account attached to the scroll. In the text, however, he does refer to it as a *ting* 亭 (pavilion), and thus in his collected works, *ting* is used rather than *caotang* 草堂 (thatched hut). Zhang Wo's depiction of a pavilion with a hip and gable roof bears this out.

- For Yang Weizhen's activities in Songjiang during the spring of 1349, see Sun Xiaoli, *Yang Weizhen nianpu* 楊維禎年譜 (Chronological biography of Yang Weizhen) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1997), 155–57.
- 16 The handscroll, executed in ink and light color on paper, is now in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. See *Zhongguo lidai huihua*, vol. 4, pls. 42–49, *fulu*, 14–17. It is recorded in *Shiqu baoji xubian* (1793), *Bidian zhulin Shiqu baoji hebian* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1988), 6, 3227–30.
  - 17 For biographical information, see *Yuanren zhuanji ziliao suoyin*, 634–36. Zhou Boqi was an important connoisseur in the Xuanwen Ge at the Yuan court.
  - 18 For Wang Wei and his estate at Wang River, see Marsha Wagner, *Wang Wei* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), chapter 5. On the *Wang Chuan tu* and its recensions, see Kohara Hironobu, “Ō I ga to sono densho sakuhin” 王維とその傳承作品, in Kohara et al., eds., *Bunjinga suihen* 文人畫粹編, vol. 1 Ō I 王維 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1975), 125–45. Lu Hong and the painting attributed to him now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, have been discussed by Zhuang Shen, “Tang Lu Hong Caotang shizhi tu juan kao” 唐盧鴻草堂十志圖卷考, in his *Zhongguo huashi yanjiu xujì* 中國畫史研究續集 (Research on the history of Chinese painting, continued) (Taipei: Zhongzheng shuju, 1972), 111–212. The scroll in Taipei is reproduced in *Gugong shuhua tu*, vol. 15 (1995), 38–48. On Li Gonglin's *Longmian shanju tu*, see Robert E. Harrist Jr., *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China: Mountain Villa* by Li Gonglin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
  - 19 For biographical information on Wang Yi, see Chen Gaohua, *Yuandai huajia shiliao huibian*, pp. 792–96.
  - 20 Tao Zongyi, *Nancun Zhuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 (Nancun's notes written during pauses from plowing) (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 130. See also Herbert Franke, “Two Yüan Treatises on the Technique of Portrait Painting,” *Oriental Art* 3, no. 1 (1950): 27–32.
  - 21 *Xiexiang jue* in *Nancun Zhuogeng lu*, 130; Franke, “Two Yüan Treatises,” 30.
  - 22 The seal is reproduced in *Zhongguo lidai huihua*, 4, pl. 72. There is no other known impression of this seal to confirm that it belongs to Zheng Yuanyou.
  - 23 Wu Sheng, *Daguan lu*, 2233. Wu uses Yang Yu's *hao* when referring to Yang Qian, compounding the confusion between the two. Yang Qian is not otherwise recorded as having been a painter.
  - 24 See *Sekai bijutsu daizenshū*, *Tōyō hen* 世界美術大全集・東洋編 (Comprehensive history of world art, East Asian series), vol. 7 *Gen* 元 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1997), pl. 115; and *Bijutsu kenkyū* 美術研究, 1 (1936), pls. 7–8.
  - 25 For biographical materials on Chen Jianru and his son Chen Zhitian, see Chen Gaohua, *Yuandai huajia shiliao huibian*, 768–72.
  - 26 For Chan portraits in general, see Jan Fontein and Money L. Hickman, *Zen Painting et Calligraphy* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1970), xxx–xxxii, xl–xlii; and Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa, *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Words*, trans. by Andreas Leisinger (Zurich: Artibus Asiae, 1996), 157–66. For the portrait of Zhongfeng Mingben, see *Sekai bijutsu daizenshū*, *Tōyō hen*, vol. 7 *Gen*, pl. 116 and Ide Seinosuke, “Chūhō Myōhon jisanzō o megutte” 中峰明本自賛像をめぐって, *Bijutsu kenkyū*, 343 (February 1983), 19–36.
  - 27 For Song imperial portraits in general, see Wen C. Fong, “Song Imperial Portraits,” in Wen C. Fong and James C.Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1996), 141–45; and *Gugong tuxiang xuancui* / *Masterpieces of Chinese Portrait Painting in the National Palace Museum* 故宮圖像選萃 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1971), pl. 19, for a standing image of Song Taizong. For the portrait of Zhao Ding, Duke of Fengguo, a hanging scroll in the collection of the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, see Sherman E. Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols: The Yüan Dynasty* (1279–1368) (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968), no. 186.
  - 28 The Yuan imperial portraits are discussed in Fong and Watt, *Possessing the Past*, 263–67. See also *Gugong tuxiang xuancui*, pls. 30–32, 34, and 36; and Anning Jing, “The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306): A Nepali Artist at the Yuan Court,” *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1–2 (1994): 40–86. For *Lidai junchen tu*, see *Shodō zenshū* 書道全集 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1966), vol. 15 *Song I* 宋 I, figs. 2 and 14.
  - 29 See *Gugong tuxiang xuancui*, pl. 24.
  - 30 The portrait of Yang Weizhen is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. See *Gugong shuhua tu*, vol. 20 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2001), 107–114 and *Gugong tuxiang xuancui*, pl. 35.
  - 31 The handscroll is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See Kojiro Tomita and A. Kaiming Chiu, “Portraits of Wu Ch'üan-chieh (1269–1350), Taoist Pope in Yüan Dynasty,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 44, no. 258 (1946): 88–95 and Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997), no. 149, 232–34.
  - 32 See Wang Lianqi, “Song ren ‘Suiyang Wulao tu’ kao” 宋人“睢陽五老圖”考 (A study of the “Five Old Men of Suiyang”

- by a Song artist), *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊, 1 (2003): 7–21; and Li Lin-tsan, “The Five Old Men of Suiyang,” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 8, no. 5 (1973): 1–21.
- 33 The handscroll with the portraits of the four Yuan scholars is in the collection of the Cincinnati Art Museum. See Ellen B. Avril, *Chinese Art in the Cincinnati Art Museum* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1997), no. 30, 64–65 and Itō Daisuke, “Genjin meiken shizō zukan” 元人名賢四像圖卷 (Four portraits of famous worthies by a Yuan artist), *Kokka* 1255 (2000): 45–47.
- 34 For Li Gonglin and the *baimiao* tradition, see Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Li Gonglin's Classic of Filial Piety* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993) and Ebine Toshio, “Gendai hakubyōga — sono shosō” 元代白描畫—その諸相, in *Suiboku bijutsu taikai* 水墨美術大系, vol. 4 *Ryōkai Indara* 梁楷因陀羅 (Tokyo: 1975), 51–62. Ebine Toshio sees the addition of light color as a move toward greater realism in Yuan dynasty *baimiao* painting.
- 35 The image of Du Fu is in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. It is heavily repainted and is not signed. The attribution to Zhao Mengfu comes from an inscription by Liu Hong dated to 1380. See *Zhao Mengfu huaji* 趙孟頫畫集 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1995), 109. The image of Su Shi, dated to 1301, is reproduced and discussed in Fong and Watt, *Possessing the Past*, pl. 143, 280–82.
- 36 See *Gugong shuhua tuhu*, vol. 21 (Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuyuan, 2002), 331–34. The portrait of Ni Zan has been reproduced and discussed in numerous sources. See Fong and Watt, *Possessing the Past*, pl. 155, 312–14, and an important recent study by Itakura Masaaki, “Zhang Yu ti ‘Ni Zan xiang’ yu Yuanmo Jiangnan wenren quan” 張雨題“倪瓚像”與元末江南文人圈 (The portrait of Ni Zan inscribed by Zhang Yu and late Yuan literati circles in Jiangnan) in *Quyū yu wanghuo: Jin qiannian lai Zhongguo meishushi yanjiu, guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 區域與網絡：近千年來中國美術史研究·國際學術研討會論文集 (Regions and networks: Research on Chinese art history of the last thousand years, a collection of essays from an international symposium) (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue yishushi yanjiusuo, 2001), 193–221.
- 37 For biographical references, see *Yuanren zhuanji ziliao suoyin*, 1288–90. Gu Dehui's life is discussed in Sensabaugh, “Life at Jade Mountain,” and in David Sensabaugh, “Guests at Jade Mountain: Aspects of Patronage in Fourteenth-Century K'un-shan,” in *Artists and Patrons*, ed. Chu-tsing Li, 93–100. Full citations are given in these two articles.
- 38 See Chiang I-han, “Yuandai damingshi Gu Ying bushanhua kao” 元代大名士顧英不善畫考 (A study of whether the famous Yuan dynasty gentleman Gu Ying was not skilled in painting), *Gugong jikan* 故宮季刊 (Palace Museum Quarterly) 16, no. 1 (1981): 31–39. Gu Ying had a portrait specialist execute a portrait of him holding an ancient *ruan* guitar. See *Yushan yigao* 玉山逸稿 (Lost drafts of Jade Mountain) 4.24b–25b in *Yushan pugao fu yigao* 玉山璞稿附逸稿 (Humble drafts of Jade Mountain with lost drafts) Lidai huajia shiwenji 16 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1971).
- 39 The rubbing is in the Jiading District Museum and is probably taken from a stone that belonged to a Zhou family of Jiading. See *Jiangsu jinshi zhi* 江蘇金石志 (Record of epigraphy in Jiangsu province) (Jiangsu, 1927), 24, 6a–7a. For a discussion of the painting, see Sensabaugh, “Life at Jade Mountain,” 55–59. The portrait was well known during the Ming and Qing dynasties; Luo Ping made a copy which is now in the Palace Museum, Beijing.
- 40 I have used the translation by James J. Y. Liu, *The Chinese Knight-Errant* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 71.
- 41 Images of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove preserved in Southern Dynasties tombs as compositions of mold-impressed bricks are the best known. See Ellen Laing, “Neo-Taoism and the ‘Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove’ in Chinese Painting,” *Artibus Asiae* 36, no. 1–2 (1974): 79–86 and Audrey Spiro, *Contemplating the Ancients: Aesthetic and Social Issues in Early Chinese Portraiture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- 42 Gu Kaizhi's painting is recorded in his biography in *Jin Shu* 晉書 (Jin history) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 92, 2405. For the Zhao Mengfu painting, see Shou-chien Shih, “The Mind Landscape of Hsieh Yu-yü by Chao Meng-fu,” in Fong et al., *Images of the Mind*, 238–54.
- 43 See Helmut Brinker, “Ch'an Portraits in a Landscape,” *Archives of Asian Art* 28 (1973–74): 8–29.
- 44 For examples from Japanese sets of Luohan paintings, see *Jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財 (Important cultural properties) vol. 8 *Kaiga* 繪畫II: *Butsuga* 佛畫 (Painting II: Buddhist painting) (Tokyo: Mainichi shinbunsha, 1973), pls. 138 (14), 146 (12), 147 (13), and 152. A Chinese example preserved at Kodai-ji, Kyoto, is illustrated in pl. 136. See also Tokyo National Museum, *Gendai Dōshaku jimbutsuga* 元代道釋人物畫 (Yuan dynasty Daoist and Buddhist figure painting) (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1978), nos. 52 and 55.
- 45 Evidence for this practice is seen in the *Yushan mingsheng ji* 玉山名勝集 and survives in the organization of the fascicles. See Sensabaugh, “Guests at Jade Mountain.”



- 46 Hu Yinglin, *Shison* 詩藪 (Thicket of poetry) (1589; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959) *waibian* 6, 231.
- 47 Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Gen Min shi gaisetsu* 元明詩概説 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1963), 103–04. The text has been translated by John Timothy Wixted as *Five Hundred Years of Chinese Poetry, 1150–1650: The Chin, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 84–85ff.
- 48 See, for example, Wai-kam Ho, “Chinese Under the Mongols,” in Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, 73–112; and Frederick W. Mote, “Chinese Society Under Mongol Rule, 1215–1368,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6 *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 616–64. Xu Zifang in his *Tiaozhan yu jueze — Yuandai wenren xintai shi* 挑戰與抉擇—元代文人心態史 (Challenge and choice — A history of the psychology of Yuan dynasty literati) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), addresses the responses of the educated elite to the challenges created by Mongol rule in China.



## YUAN PERIOD TOMBS AND THEIR INSCRIPTIONS

### *Changing Identities for the Chinese Afterlife*

#### Abstract

Bearded males wearing caps with back flaps and sitting feet-apart in three-quarter poses found in paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries on north Chinese tomb walls heretofore have been believed to be Mongols. A painting of this type found in a tomb dated to 1269 in Donger village of Shaanxi in 1998 raises the possibility that a Mongol pose and attire does not necessarily indicate Mongol ethnicity. When read correctly, the inscription in the Dongercun tomb informs us that the interred male is Chinese. Inscriptions in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century tombs in Hansenzhai, Shaanxi, and Dongguan village, Hebei, found in the early twenty-first century, also confirm that their occupants are Chinese. Uninscribed tombs excavated in the vicinity of Jinan, Shandong province, share imagery with the Shaanxi and Hebei tombs. Paintings and their details in all these tombs trace to the Northern Song (960–1127) or Yuan (1279–1368) periods, sometimes with specific objects that could have been owned or used by the tomb occupants. Yet other details in the paintings represent features or objects exclusive to Mongols. Ethnicity, in fact, can only be known through the written word, for in the Mongolian period in China, some Chinese represented themselves as Mongols for the afterlife.

ONLY RARELY IN THE MYRIAD OF TOMB EXCAVATIONS reported yearly from China does one of unique significance emerge. The tomb discovered in 1998 in Dongercun (Donger village) 洞耳村, Pucheng 蒲城 county, Shaanxi, is such a tomb.<sup>1</sup> When the find was announced in 2000, it was the first tomb with murals excavated in that province from the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the age of Mongolian rule in China.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of another Yuan tomb with wall paintings in Xi'an in 2001, returns attention to the tomb in Dongercun; separated by just one hundred kilometers, both have dated inscriptions.<sup>3</sup> Just a year later, a Yuan tomb with two inscriptions, one dated, was found in Zhouxian 涿縣, Hebei, another province that theretofore had yielded no Yuan tombs with murals.<sup>4</sup> Published together with the tomb in Zhou county was a tomb with murals excavated in 1997 in Jinan 濟南, Shandong, a province where several other Yuan tombs with narrative relief sculpture were uncovered between 1986 and 1991 and earlier.<sup>5</sup> The interior walls of the newly reported Jinan tomb were covered with a combination of painting and relief sculpture. In 2005, three more Yuan tombs with murals in Shandong were announced.<sup>6</sup> By now, Yuan tombs with wall paintings or narrative relief sculpture have been found in more than half of China's provinces.<sup>7</sup>

Until about 1990, our image of Yuan tomb interiors was dominated by a type of painting found in Chifeng 赤峰 county of Inner Mongolia (figs. 1, 2).<sup>8</sup> Outside Chifeng, in Shanxi and Liaoning, a few tombs with more diverse paintings and

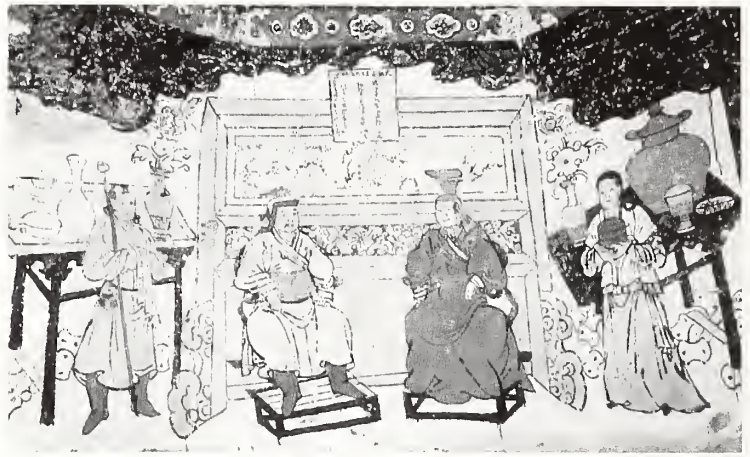
<sup>1</sup> Painting of tomb occupants, north wall, Yuanbaoshan tomb, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia. From *Wenwu*, no. 4 (1983), color pl. 1.





2

Painting of north wall, Sanyanjing tomb, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia.  
From *Wenwu* no. 1 (1982), pl. 6, fig. 1



3

Painting of tomb occupants and servants, north, northeast, and northwest walls, Dongercun tomb, 1269. From *Kaogu yu wenwu*, no. 1 (2000), front inside cover, lower image.

even several with occupants identified through short inscriptions had been found, but those, too, usually contain a dominant male and one or more females seated together in a prominent position in the tomb.<sup>9</sup> Based on their garments and hats, the men have been assumed to be Mongols.<sup>10</sup> The women, by contrast, wear Chinese dress and have Chinese hairstyles, and whether they are in fact Chinese or Mongolians choosing to enter the afterlife as Chinese beauties, has been a matter of speculation. In either case, the depiction of what appear to be Mongolian men in prominent places in subterranean tombs replete with murals has been considered important evidence that members of the conquest dynasty adopted Chinese funerary customs. This appearance is particularly significant because the corpses of Mongol rulers of China were returned to the land of their nativity for burial in unmarked graves, so that almost nothing about royal Mongolian burial practice is known.<sup>11</sup> At first glance, the focal painting in the Dongercun tomb is yet another of this group (fig. 3).

It is the inscription in the Shaanxi tomb, however, that causes us to reconsider who is portrayed in figure 3 and perhaps in similar paintings, and why. When examined alongside the two more recently uncovered tombs with longer inscriptions in Xi'an and Zhou county, and then compared to even more recently discovered tombs in Shandong with similar images,<sup>12</sup> information and its implications about the tomb builders is further complicated: a subset of repeated motifs in Yuan-period tomb murals across north China are traceable to representations in books or on objects commissioned during the century of Mongolian rule of China, often with sources in the Northern Song period; but the representations of men and women, and sometimes, narrative passages on the walls, are not as standardized. Words alongside the paintings suggest that tomb builders were fundamentally concerned with ethnicity from the first through the last centuries of the Yuan period, and for this reason made unprecedented choices in the history of self-representation.

### Dongercun Tomb

In March 1998, a villager of Dongercun stumbled upon an almost completely preserved tomb in a pear grove. Approached from ground level by a 6.4-meter, stepped ramp, the underground brick tomb consists of a 1.8-meter approach (*yongdao* 甬道) and an eight-sided chamber with a vaulted ceiling that rises 2.74 meters at its highest point. This tomb is orientated three degrees east of due north. Walls of the



4  
Painting of serving wine, southwest and west walls, Dongercun tomb.  
From *Kaogu yu wenwu*, no. 1 (2000), front cover.



5  
Painting of tomb occupants and servants, southeast and east walls, Dongercun tomb. From *Kaogu yu wenwu*, no. 1 (2000), front inside cover, upper image.

four cardinal directions are wider than the intermediate sides, with 2.52 meters the greatest distance between opposite walls. All the walls are formed by nine layers of brick and covered with white lime to provide a painting surface. The floor-to-ceiling paintings of the interior were found in pristine condition (figs. 3–5). They are a contrast to the otherwise nearly empty tomb. When uncovered, the Dongercun tomb contained only a 70-cm-wide funerary bed, pieces of two ceramic vessels, and an uninscribed brick tablet.

Although eight sides lend themselves to eight scenes, and eight was a common division of narrative elements in interior tomb decoration in north China during the century prior to Yuan,<sup>13</sup> the eight walls of the Dongercun tomb present three scenes, separated from one another by a thick, brown line whose intent probably was to replicate an interior wooden column. Most prominent is a painting of the occupant that spreads across the north wall behind the funerary bed and beyond to the adjoining northeastern and northwestern walls. The dated inscription at its top center—the focal point of an inner triangle formed by the sides and feet of the screen and an outer one by the servants and tables—is further evidence of the importance of this three-wall section.

Seated on chairs at three-quarters pose in front of the screen are a male and female, presumably the occupants (fig. 3). Care has been taken to render specific details, elements that may indicate rank or an affiliation. The male wears an oversized cumerbund and two-colored cap from which red fur or feathers project at the top and a red, perhaps leather, flap hangs behind it. It is headgear known to have been worn by Mongols, and painted on the heads of Chifeng tomb occupants (figs. 1, 2). The woman wears an especially bulky garment, perhaps of one piece or a jacket over a skirt or dress. Her hat (*boqta* in Mongolian, *gugu* 固姑 in Chinese) is a type associated with Mongolian female royalty. It is worn by the wife of Khubilai Khan (1214–1294), Chabi (d. 1281), and other royal Mongolian women depicted in famous portraits now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.<sup>14</sup> The women in the Chifeng tombs do not wear this type of hat, suggesting it is an important distinctive feature of the Dongercun tomb (figs. 1, 2, 3). The diminished size of servants, probably adults but smaller than those they serve and smaller still in comparison to the tables from which they serve, is in accord with Chinese funerary images in the centuries before the Mongols conquered China. The side on which the male or female sits varies. Numerous examples of this kind of painting are found in the Northern





6



7

6

Painting of occupants, Tomb No. 1, Baisha, Henan, Northern Song. From Su Bai, *Baisha Songmu*, color pl. 5.

7

*Shilin guangji*, *Yililei*, *qianji*, *juan* 11/8b-10a, Yuan period.

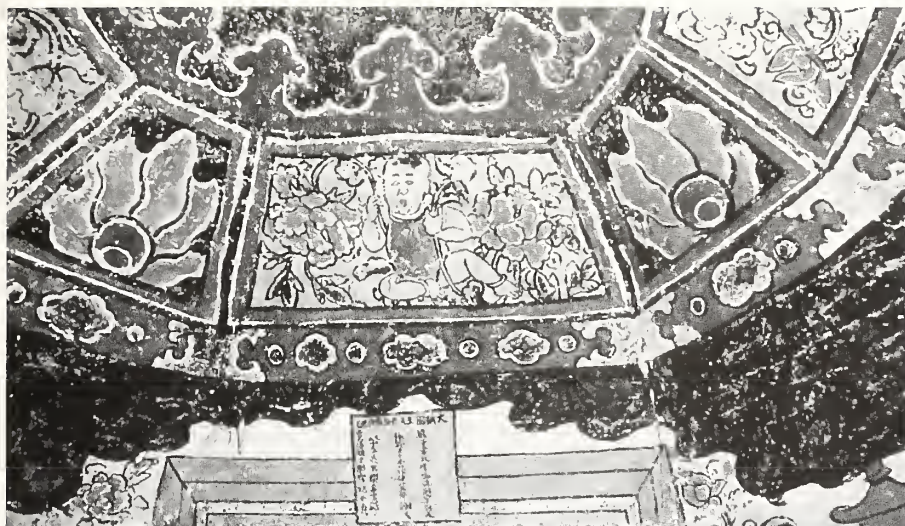
Song (960–1127) and Jin (1115–1234) periods, and the precedent can be traced more than a thousand years earlier than Yuan (fig. 6).<sup>15</sup>

At Dongercun, wine is served to the left and right of the central image. The standing figure in back of the group, to the left of the occupant painting (west and southwest walls), wears the same color garment, large cumerbund, and same hat worn by the male tomb occupant on the north wall and probably, therefore, is the occupant himself (fig. 4). The kneeling figures in front of him are positioned so that each one and the objects he holds can be viewed individually. A pair of horses and pair of dogs, one in profile, the other with turned head, bracket the men. Careful planning, symmetry, and balance transform the two pairs of walls into single images, and the three back walls have become a single focus of the tomb.<sup>16</sup> As on the back walls, decorative and landscape elements, here a rock and leaves enclosed by a balustrade and a tree, are unrealistically scaled in comparison to the figures alongside whom they are placed.

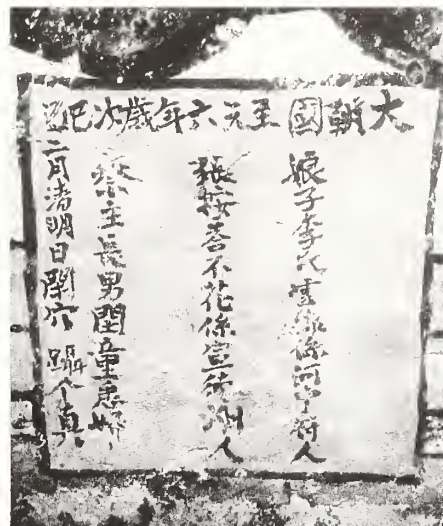
The wine carrier is just one among a group of entertainers on the east and southeastern walls (fig. 5). Six men are painted. The one wearing the blue garment, red-orange cumerbund, and red fur or feathered cap, must again be the tomb occupant, even though here and in the western scene, his boots are black with red tops whereas on the north wall they are red.<sup>17</sup> A man who, we assume from his shaved head, is a servant, leads the main figure toward a pair of dancers. The performer to their left is dressed like the occupant, his garment held together at the waist by a cumerbund, and he wears a fur or feathered cap with a black flap. Every detail is clear and thus intended to be noticed. Three figures wear hats with the same top projections, but seamed into at least four sections, a type worn by a servant on the west and southwest walls. This hat is found in Yuan printed books (fig. 7).<sup>18</sup>

Other paintings in the Dongercun tomb are on the walls of the *yongdao* (underground approach) and the ceiling. On the west side of the approach, a man leading a horned animal wears a hat with a large brim that excavators suggest may have





8  
Lower part of ceiling, north wall,  
Dongercun tomb. From *Kaogu yu  
wenwu* no. 1 (2000), back inside cover,  
lower image.



9  
Inscription on north wall, Dongercun  
tomb. From *Kaogu yu wenwu*, no. 1  
(2000), 18.

been made of straw or bamboo.<sup>19</sup> The headgear is clear and distinct, and has no counterpart in illustrative material of the Mongols. On the east is a riderless carriage, a common subject in funerary painting in China and at her borders that has been interpreted as a sign that its passenger has left this world.<sup>20</sup>

The ceiling paintings in the Dongercun tomb are extraordinary. A band of between forty and forty-two centimeters in width joins each of the eight wall sections to the ceiling above it. Each narrow side above the band contains a flower whose five petals emerge upward in flamelike formation. Each broad section is occupied by a bare-limbed boy holding the stem of a flower as large as he is in each hand. The flowers are of different varieties. At the border of the apex of the ceiling is a trefoil pattern known in Chinese as *ruyi* 如意 perhaps calyx and receptacle, whose projections are spaced at each of the eight corners plus an additional four, one above each boy's head (fig. 8). Painting at the top center of the ceiling is effaced.

Below the boy in figure 8 and at the top center of the screen painted on the south wall is the inscription that is key to understanding the Dongercun tomb. The characters are presented in five lines, one across the top and four from top to bottom, probably read from right to left (fig. 9). The inscription reads:

大朝國至元六年歲次己巳  
娘子李氏雲線 係河中府人  
張按答不花 係宣德州人  
祭主長男閨童悉婦  
二月清明日閑穴躡个真

Sixth year of Zhiyuan, the *jisi* year, of the State of the Great Court:  
[horizontal line]

The Lady surnamed Li, first name Yunxian, a native of Hezhong district  
The Anda Zhang Buhua, a native of Xuande prefecture  
The eldest son who is in charge of sacrifices, nurtured young children,  
the women.

In the second moon, on a clear, bright day, into the empty tomb their  
essences are sealed in time.<sup>21</sup>



10

10

Zaju actors, east wall, Xilizhuang tomb, Yuncheng, Shanxi. From *Wenwu*, no. 5 (1988), color pl. 1.

Every line of the simply inscribed passage is significant, and almost every one is ambiguous. The puzzles begin with the first three characters, *Dachaoguo* 大朝國. Meaning, “State of the Great Court,” it is a name used in the early years of Mongolian rule before the dynasty name Yuan would have appeared.<sup>22</sup> As for *Zhiyuan* 至元, there are two possible reign periods, one from 1264–94 and the other from 1335–41. The two characters, *jisi* 己巳, confirm the date as 1269, since the sixth year of the second *Zhiyuan* period would have been *kengchen* 庚辰.<sup>23</sup> Provocative information about the male occupant is provided in the second vertical line: his name is Zhang Buhua 張不花, a native of the Xuande 宣德 region (today in Hebei), and he is *anda*, the Mongolian word for a “sworn friend.”<sup>24</sup> At the outset, then, in addition to his clothing, one is inclined to think he is a Mongol because of the inscription. Further, his Chinese surname, “Zhang,” was commonly adopted by Mongols during the Yuan period.<sup>25</sup> Further still, the name “Buhua” could be seen as evidence of Mongol ethnicity, for it is a sinicized form of the Turco-Mongolian “Buqa,” meaning “bull,” one of the most common names of the era. Dozens of Buhua/Buqa are recorded in *Yuan shi* 元史 and Rashid al-Din’s *Jami al-Tawarikh*.<sup>26</sup>

Yet there also is reason to believe just the opposite, namely, that the man painted on the wall of the Dongercun tomb, presumably the occupant, was Chinese and chose to be portrayed as a Mongol.<sup>27</sup> In Yuan history writings, such as *Yuanshi* (Standard history of Yuan), *Yuanwen lei* 元文類 (Categories of Yuan writings), *Yuanchao mingchen shilitie* 元朝名臣事略 (Affairs of famous officials of the Yuan dynasty), and *Yuan dianzhang* 元典章 (Collection of statutes and substatutes of Yuan), cases in which Mongols adopt Chinese surnames are rare.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, many examples of Chinese who adopted Mongolian or other non-Chinese surnames to gain bureaucratic or legal advantages are known.<sup>29</sup> Adopting a name that is so clearly foreign to the Chinese tongue and yet used among Turkic and Mongolian people — such as Buhua — is a most logical choice. The presentation of the name in the inscription, however, is a clue to the man’s ethnicity. In an inscription in which a Mongol refers to himself in the Yuan period, he identifies his lineage





11

11

Archway above entry to main chamber of Dongercun tomb. View from south wall of *yongdao*. From *Kaogu yu wenwu* no. 1 (2000), 19.



12

12

Archway above south wall of Tomb No. 2, Baisha. From Su Bai, *Baisha Songmu*, color pl. 10.

(*oboq*), whereas a Chinese identifies himself by native place, the manner of presentation here.<sup>30</sup> Even the use of *anda* in the inscription may mean, simply, that the interred is a sworn friend of a Mongol.<sup>31</sup> All would be consistent with a Chinese official, or someone aspiring to political or social position, who, in 1269 when the Mongols were in the ascendant, recognized the potential of the new dynasty to endure.

If casting one's lot and perhaps thereby securing favor for one's progeny in a future in which the Mongols ruled seems straightforward, especially early in the dynasty, a Chinese committing himself to identification as a Mongol for all eternity has different implications. In fact, in death, Zhang Buhua allies himself with both traditions. Obvious features in the painting — the pose and hat — are those of a Mongol, but the written word and its format — subtler aspects of the tomb décor that should have been recognizable to a Chinese but perhaps not to a Mongol — reveal his true identity.<sup>32</sup>

Based on the supposition that the interred male is a Chinese who was painted in Mongolian guise, we turn to information about the woman in the first vertical line, the most straightforward of the inscription.<sup>33</sup> It informs us that the female tomb occupant is Li Yunxian 李雲線, a woman from Hezhong 河中. Like Zhang, Li is a Chinese surname commonly taken by Mongols who sought Chinese identities, a name that alone would not reveal her true identity.<sup>34</sup> Yet also like her husband, and following the Chinese system, the inscription records her birthplace. There were at least two Hezhong in Yuan China, one about two hundred kilometers northeast of Anxi (Xi'an) and the other at the southwestern tip of Shanxi.<sup>35</sup> The tomb is approximately midway between the two, so that either is a logical birthplace. Southern Shanxi would place Madame Li in the Pingyang region, China's most flourishing location of tomb and temple wall decoration in the Jin and Yuan periods.<sup>36</sup> In fact, in precisely this location, in Xilizhuang 西里莊, Yuncheng 運城 county, near Hezhong, is a tomb with a mural that illustrates a form of popular drama known as *zaju* 雜劇. Probably painted after 1269, the Xilizhuang mural depicts a performer among the figures whose turned arm and bent elbow recall the pose of the long-sleeved entertainer on the southeastern wall of Dongercun tomb (figs. 5, 10).<sup>37</sup> No counterpart to the word *anda* is juxtaposed with the name Li Yunxian, but this woman, who may have hailed from a center of Chinese popular culture in her day, entered the afterlife wearing the hat of a married Mongolian woman.





13

13  
Ceramic vessel with pair of turning birds, Yuan period. Yamato Bunkakan, Nara. Courtesy of Yamato Bunkakan.



14

14  
Detail of textile showing pairs of turning birds, Yuan period, Geizidong, Longhua, Hebei. From *Wenwu*, no. 5 (2004), 6.



15

15  
Cherubic child holding stem of flower, from southeast wall of tomb in Dengfeng, Hebei, 1097. From *Wenwu*, no. 8 (2005), 68.



16  
Ceramic vessel showing bare-limbed youth holding flower stems, excavated from Yuan boat off the coast of Suizhong, Liaoning. From Zhang Wei, *Suizhong*, 91.

The next line in the inscription is the most ambiguous. The first four characters, *jizhu zhangnan* 祭主長男, should refer to the deceased couple's eldest son who, presumably, is in charge of sacrifices or other ceremonies at the tomb. *Run tong xi fu* 閏童悉婦 are more problematic. *Run* 閏, as it appears here, is most often used to refer to an intercalary addition, usually a month, to keep the Chinese lunar-based calendar in coincidence with the seasons. Based on that reading, "interspersed youths" is a possible interpretation of the two characters, a meaning that could be related to the positions of cherubs holding flowers in paintings on the lower part of the ceiling. A more logical understanding of the passage is possible, however, if one assumes that the water radical was omitted from the character on the wall.<sup>38</sup> If the intent was *run* with the radical, the character means moist, fattened, or enriched, and *runtong* 潤童, then, would refer to fattened or nourished *tong* 童, that is, healthy young males, a wish for the future of the family. In addition, it might even be illustrated by the four young male children who hold flowers on the lower portions of the ceiling (fig. 8). The final two characters in the third vertical line, then, would be a reference to the women of the household. In other words, the eight characters in the third line of the inscription present themselves as four couplets, each referring to family members of the deceased: the first two characters refer to him or those in charge of ceremonies, who may or may not be the same as *zhangnan* 長男, the eldest son, referred to in the second couplet; the third couplet refers to the occupants' younger sons or future young sons; and the last couplet refers to women of the household.

The characters *qingmingri* 清明日 in the last line are translated as "on a clear, bright day." It is possible they refer to the festival Qingming, the time of tomb sweeping that seems to be an appropriate occasion to complete and seal a tomb. In some years, however, the Qingming Festival does not fall during the second moon, so a more general meaning of a day with auspicious weather is used here.<sup>39</sup>

One more section of painting in the Dongercun tomb is worth mentioning. Above the south wall of the entry to the tomb is a pair of birds holding stems (fig. 11). They turn in flight, one head up and the other head down. A similar pair adorns the entry to Tomb No. 2 at Baisha 白沙, adjacent to the source of figure 6 (fig. 12). Like the formation of male and female occupant, large and seated, with smaller servants as well as curtains, screen, and inscriptions behind them, the pair of birds again suggest the Dongercun tomb images to be traceable to Northern Song sources.<sup>40</sup>





17

17  
Interior view of Hansenzhai tomb,  
Xi'an, 1288. From *Wenwu*, no. 1  
(2004), 63.



18

18  
Women on west wall of *yongdao*,  
Hansenzhai tomb. From *Wenwu*, no.  
1 (2004), 66.

Pairs of birds turning in response to each other also are a common motif on ceramics and textiles of the Yuan and Northern Song periods (figs. 13, 14).<sup>41</sup> Scantily clothed young boys holding flowers are less frequently painted but have similar sources. A tomb dated 1097, excavated in Dengfeng 登封 county, only fifty kilometers northwest of Baisha, has images of cherubic boys holding the stems of flowers alternating with bracket sets along the upper border of the wall (fig. 15).<sup>42</sup> Two bare-armed boys appear on a Yuan vase uncovered in a shipwreck at Sandaogang 三道崗, Suizhong 綏中, Liaoning province, one with caped shoulders and the other with shoulders bare (fig. 16).<sup>43</sup> No matter the earliest source or attached meaning of either motif, by the thirteenth century, it could have been copied on the pot and the wall without attention to its context. This is true even if, in addition, the inscription refers to the boys in the ceiling painting. More examples of motifs found on walls of Yuan tombs that can be traced to portable objects of Northern Song and Yuan times are discussed below.

### Hansenzhai Tomb

A tomb with murals discovered in 2001 in the Hansenzhai 韓森寨 section of the eastern suburbs of Xi'an also contains a dated inscription. Although less well preserved than the tomb in Dongercun, the Xi'an tomb is similar to it structurally. Also oriented just three degrees off due north, a diagonal, stepped ramp leads to an entry passage and squarish, domed main chamber, this one 2.06 by 1.95 meters at the base. A niche is found on each wall of the entry passage (fig. 17).

In spite of effacement, it is evident that the painter of the Hansenzhai tomb was more skilled than the painter at Dongercun. The versatility of the brush is shown in the outline that varies from thick to thin strokes and brings particular attention to the gathering of sleeves between elbow and hand (fig. 18). Figure 18, a detail of three women on the west wall of the entry, is one of the several partially preserved scenes. Except for a servant standing behind the coffin bed on the lower right of the north wall, all extant figures are female and none appears to be an occupant. The subjects of the Hansenzhai paintings thus are very different from those at Dongercun where the male occupant appears in each scene.



19

19  
Northwest corner of main chamber, showing three-dimensional bracket set and trefoil pattern along band of upper wall, Hansenzhai tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 1 (2004), 65.



20

20  
False door with bowtie-shaped door pins, north wall, Hansenzhai tomb. From *Xi'an Hansenzhai*, color pl. 5.

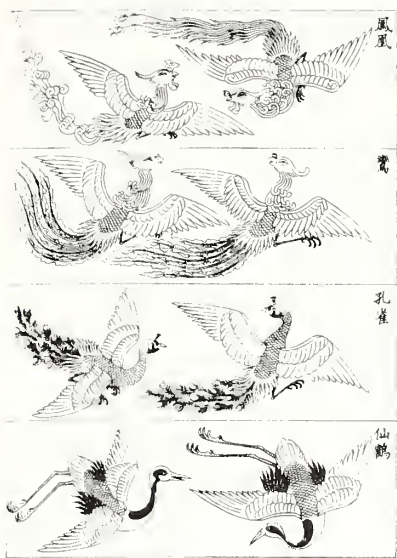
Just as the painting of the Hansenzhai tomb is more detailed, its architecture is also more complex than that of the tomb at Dongercun, where the only structural details are brown pillarlike stripes along the meeting points of some of the eight wall sides (figs. 3–5). At Hansenzhai, three-dimensional, two-tier bracket sets are molded onto every interior corner, and lamp stands are molded onto the walls (fig. 19). The three-dimensional details are large and emphatic in comparison to the size of the figures. Bowtie-shaped door pins (*zan* 簪) hold the frame of a false door into place (fig. 20).

Details of the Hansenzhai tomb murals suggest direct links with the Dongercun tomb: red trefoils against a black band form a decorative strip that interfaces the walls and ceiling (figs. 8, 19), and turning birds fill the lower sections of the ceiling. The distance between Pucheng and Xi'an is about a hundred kilometers, so it is not surprising that the same patterns and motifs would be found in both tombs, especially since, as we shall read in the inscription, the Xi'an tomb was made only nineteen years later than the one at Dongercun. Also, as we have observed in the Dongercun tomb, portable objects may have been sources of Hansenzhai motifs. Patterns of curtains in illustrations of the 1330s edition of *Shilin guangji* 事林廣記 (Compendium of a forest of affairs), the source of figure 7, or birds in the architectural manual, *Yingzao fashi* 營造法式 (Building standards), presented to the Northern Song court in 1103, are possible examples (fig. 21).<sup>44</sup> Textile patterns also may be sources for the borders of tomb ceilings (fig. 22).<sup>45</sup>

The inscription in the Hansenzhai tomb is much longer than the one painted onto the screen at Dongercun, and not as elusive. Found on a squarish brick, 29.9 by 29.4 centimeters on the top and 4.7 to 4.8 centimeters thick, that was uncovered behind the funerary bed at the back wall of the tomb, the fourteen-line, 322-character inscription reads:

維大元至元二十五年歲次戊子月朔安葬祭主安西府咸寧縣東關居住  
□□韓於先亡祖考妣之喪俱不記年月日歿故又亡妻呂氏甲辰相享年  
四十三歲於至元二十三年八月二十五日歿故龜筮協從相地襲吉宜於  
本縣龍首鄉朝堂社常樂坡正西原上道北買到墳地四畝內安厝宅兆謹





21

21  
Patterns for birds in architectural decoration. From Li Jie, *Yingzao fashi*, juan 33, 2006 edition, vol. 2, p. 926.



22

22  
Detail of Yamantaka Mandala, ca. 1330–1332, 245.5 x 209 cm. Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art.

用錢九萬九千九百九十九貫文兼五綵信幣置到墳地一座南北長一十二步五分東西闊九步五分二厘積一佰一十九步其地東至青龍西至白虎南至朱雀北至玄武內方勾陳分掌四域丘丞墓伯封步界畔道路將軍齊整阡陌千秋百載永無殃咎若□干犯訶禁者將軍亭長收付河伯今以牲牢酒飯口吞香新共為信契財地交相分付工匠修塋安厝已後永保大吉知見人歲月主保人今日直符故氣邪精不得懺愆先有□（居者）（永避萬里）（若違）此約地□□□□（府主吏自當）其禍主人內外存亡悉皆安吉急急□（如）□□□（五帝使）者女青律令

On the first day of the lunar month, in the twenty-fifth year of the Zhiyuan reign period (1288), the occupant of the tomb, Han XX [characters effaced] of Dongguan 東關 in Xianning 咸寧 county, Anxi prefecture (Yuan-period name of Xi'an), was laid to rest in the tomb. The times of death of his ancestors had not been recorded but his wife, née Lü, had died at the age of forty-three *sui* 歲, on the twenty-fifth day of the eighth moon (September 4) of 1286. Now they divined with tortoise shells and yarrow stalks to select a place to bury all of them. They settled upon an auspicious and appropriate place, and purchased a burial site of four *mou* 畝 in Longshou 龍首 village in their native prefecture. It was on the north side of the road, on the plain, due west of Changle 常樂 slope, at Chaotang 朝堂. They placed the coffin temporarily in a safe burial place near the house. With care they spent 99,999 strings of cash and five tokens of currency in the construction of the tomb. Its length was twelve *bu* 步, five *fen* from north to south and east to west its width was nine *bu*, five *fen* 分, two *li* 厘. The area was 119 *bu*. The four boundaries of the square were marked off—east to the green dragon, west to the white tiger, south to the red bird, and north to the dark warrior. They erected boundaries and established the roads and paths to and around the tomb, and a guard to keep it neat and orderly. Let it last a thousand autumns without misfortune. If someone violates or ridicules, which is prohibited, the guardians or officers will hand him over to the Lord of the River. Now, with animal sacrifices and food and wine libations enacted, and incense burned anew,



23  
Door pins of house in Gaoping  
county, Shanxi, Yuan period. Photo  
by William Steinhardt.

they drew up a contract about goods and land that was agreed upon by all concerned. Payment was made and the craftsmen got to work constructing the tomb and arranging the coffin. May great auspiciousness be preserved here ever after....

In contrast to the inscription at Dongercun, the writing here clearly identifies the male tomb occupant as Chinese. The Xi'an tomb inscription reads like a standard contract for a burial ground: it begins by confirming that the location has been divined and is auspicious; next, it confirms that payment had been made for the land, and specifies the dimensions and boundaries, restating the boundaries by standard, generic references to the four directional animals that have figured prominently in funerary environments since the late centuries BCE, and threatening those who might trespass or challenge the designated realm of the deceased with the vengeance of a water deity associated with death; and finally, the inscription lauds the descendants for their service in site selection and payment.<sup>46</sup> If, as the painting in the Dongercun tomb suggests, Chinese tomb owners were portrayed as Mongols in the late thirteenth century, perhaps the Chinese man named Han chose instead not to be painted but rather to refer to himself by word alone. Perhaps he concealed an identity of status or wealth, one that garnered him a wall painter with skill at outline and a calligrapher who clearly and correctly wrote every character of his long inscription, as well.

### Dongguancun Tomb

The third Yuan tomb with murals and inscriptions was found in August 2002 in Dongguan 東關 village,<sup>47</sup> Zhuo county, Hebei, eleven kilometers from the Juma 拒馬 River, in the vicinity of the famous Yunju 雲居 Monastery, the repository of thousands of Liao (947–1126) sutras carved in stone, and the site of Liao and Yuan pagodas.<sup>48</sup> Like the above-described Yuan tombs, the Dongguan village burial is a one-chamber, brick structure, in this case, eight-sided. It is 3.64 meters at its longest point with wall faces of 1.24–1.32 meters. The walls are formed of twenty-one layers of brick from floor to ceiling, all of them covered with white lime base prior to painting. When excavated, a brick coffin remained in the tomb and there is believed to have been a second one.

The entry to the Dongguancun tomb chamber is decorated with an archway whose upper lintel is held in place by eight-spoke door pins. They are more decorative than the bowtie-shaped pins on the north wall of the Hansenzhai tomb, and more decorative than *zan* in some residences but the feature follows real construction. The only residence from the Yuan period has squarish studs holding its door-frame in place (fig. 23). If *zan* were associated with status like so many other features





24

East wall showing women and inscription on screen behind them, Dongguancun tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004), 51.



25

West wall showing women and inscription on screen behind them, Dongguancun tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004), 47.

of Chinese timber-frame architecture, the more complicated, the greater the associated eminence, then both the Hansenzhai and Dongyuancun tombs belong to occupants of greater status than the homeowner of the dwelling in Gaoping 高平 county of Shanxi.<sup>49</sup>

The decorative aspect of the lintel hardly prepares one for the splendid figures in mountainous terrains, carefully painted female servants, and the imaginative sweeping motion of cranes that cover the tomb walls. Five of the walls have screen paintings, two of them with long inscriptions (figs. 24–26).

Each of the eight walls of the Dongguancun tomb interior has a self-contained composition. The eight also divide themselves into three symmetrically placed pairs with respect to the tomb entrance and back wall. Further, the three walls at the back of the tomb form an integrated group with paintings of curtains spanning adjacent walls, similar to the configuration in the Dongercun tomb. There is no doubt tombs like these were planned in entirety before painting commenced. The decorative bands between walls and lower ceilings continue across the tomb without break, both offering continuity to the interior and dividing the wall from the ceiling. Least elaborated is the south wall, with floral patterns around the archway and a pair of cranes on the ceiling. Opposite on the north wall are a screen with two birds on bamboo branches on the upper wall and cranes on the ceiling (fig. 24). The same scenes are found on either side, along with curtains drawn to the sides. The other halves of the curtains join on the east and west walls, framing servants with inscribed screens behind them.

Every figure on the lower parts of the six walls just described is probably a servant. Certainly a male tomb occupant is not among them. However, he might be represented on the southeast or southwest walls (figs. 27, 28). The excavation report about the tomb suggests the subjects of these paintings are filial piety scenes, but no specific story is identified.<sup>50</sup> Images of children are common in filial piety narratives, and children as well as the elderly are found on both the southeast and southwest walls, but equally apparent are a supine figure in a shack, a woman riding bareback on a tiger, a meditating man, a man next to two fish, and food offerings.

In an important way, the format of the southeast and southwest walls of the Dongguancun tomb—narrative scenes separated by enclosing landscapes—follows those of Yuan murals in halls of the famous Shanxi Daoist monastery,



26

Line drawing of north wall showing screen with curtain in lower portion and turning birds above, Dongguancun tomb, 1331. From *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004), 45.





27

27  
Lower portion of southeast wall,  
Dongguancun tomb. From *Wenwu*,  
no. 3 (2004), 53.



28

28  
Lower portion of southwest wall,  
Dongguancun tomb. From *Wenwu*,  
no. 3 (2004), 53.

Yonglegong 永樂宮, near Yuncheng, and thus again suggests connections with contemporary temple wall painting.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, specific comparisons can be made between images in the tomb and those at Yonglegong or in other Daoist paintings. A figure slumbering in a grass-roofed hut painted in the upper right corner of the southeastern wall of the Dongguancun tomb might be compared to two sleeping figures in a similar structure on the east wall of Chongyang Hall.<sup>52</sup> The tiger-rider, dark-skinned officials, and a figure associated with fish do not appear in Yonglegong murals but they are found in a version of a Daoist painting attributed to the Yuan period, the *Nine Song of Qu Yuan* 屈原, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (figs. 29, 30).<sup>53</sup> The dark-skinned male in military garb on both the southeast and southwest walls rides a horse with an impressive array of trappings. The skin color and hat with back flap and top projection, similar to those of the men in figure 30, may indicate that the male tomb occupant is shown here as a Mongol. If so, it is also possible that some of his descendants appear on these two walls, for as the inscriptions tell us, he had many.

The inscription on the east wall reads (fig. 25):

時大元國涿州范陽人李氏字淑/敬諱儀/敕受承德郎大都路府判壽已  
致/仕私第東城□□妻  
南鄉當陌村方氏四子二女長男秉彝造此壽堂/次子秉溫早世次秉直  
秉仁平峪/縣□□/孫秉彝/弟兄等子/女一十二人也/至順二年五月十五  
日造

Here is Li Shujing 李淑敬, a man of Fanyang 范陽 in Zhuo prefecture of the Great Yuan dynasty. He had the official name of Yi 儀. He was appointed *chengdelang* 承德郎<sup>54</sup> of the Daidu circuit<sup>55</sup> and *fupan* 府判.<sup>56</sup> His private residence was in the eastern city XXXX [at least two characters missing]. His wife was from Dangmo 當陌 village in Nanxiang 南鄉. In the family, there were four sons and two daughters. The eldest son, Bingyi 秉彝, built this *shou-tang* 壽堂 (mourning hall). The next son, Bingwen 秉溫, predeceased him. Next were Bingzhi 秉直 and Bingren 秉仁 of Pingyuxian 平峪縣 XXXX [at least two characters missing]. Bingyi and his brothers sired twelve sons and daughters. Constructed<sup>57</sup> on the fifteenth day of the fifth moon of 1331.



29

29

*Spirit of the Mountain*, from Zhang Wu attr., *Nine Song of Qu Yuan*, Yuan period. Published with permission of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The inscription on the west wall reads (fig. 26):

李秉彝述/父積行志父正蒙賓節生/卻三十餘年嚴其正五九月/又常懷  
濟眾之心愛成人美/事故秉彝知父百千年/後端居神道也後人若成/偶  
然見此壽堂祝死所毀/既不所毀感有吉應見/而存此實有吉應端不/可  
以□有兇/神人李秉彝謹書/□□□□



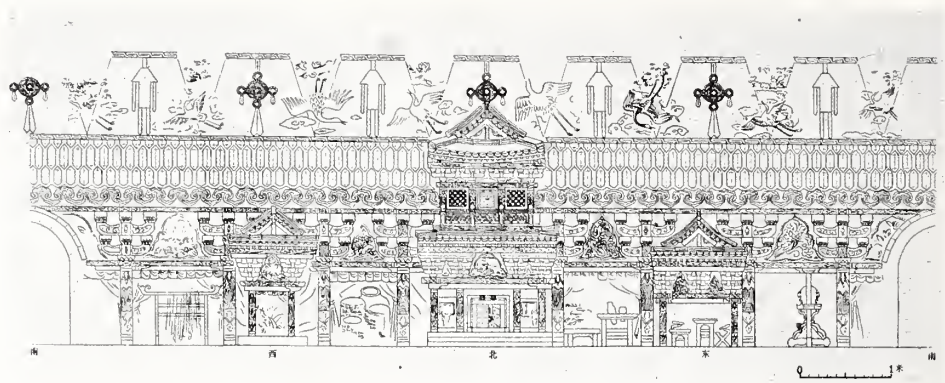
30

*Patriots Who Died in Battle*, from Zhang Wu attr., *Nine Song of Qu Yuan*, Yuan period. Published with permission of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Li Bingyi wrote this record of his father's journey through life: My father, Zheng Meng 正蒙, took upon himself the affairs of life. For more than thirty years, he strictly and consistently [performed ceremonies of the first, fifth, and ninth moons]. He unwaveringly nurtured the hopes of the masses to make it possible for people to achieve their desires. Therefore, I, Bingyi, know that my father will endure for thousands of years and that he will with uprightness reside in the spirit of the *dao* 道. If those of later generations by chance come to see this commemorative hall, it is the hope that death will be vanquished. Even if death is not averted, it is my wish that auspiciousness will be the response and whatever in fact is herein will be echoed with auspiciousness so that it will not be possible for there to be [XXX granted (character missing)] an omen of the gods. Written with care by Li Bingyi XXXX [four characters missing].

From this inscription, we learn Li Shujing's native place, region of government service, titles, and names and numbers of his spouse and two generations of descendants. The second inscription, although it is only vaguely specific, informs us that Li Shujing was an upright citizen. The statements could have been written in earlier or later centuries, for they express the desires of any tomb builder of any age.<sup>58</sup> They place Li Shujing in a multimillennial history of the interred for whom such aspirations may be assumed but rarely can be proved.





31

31  
Line drawing of paintings on walls  
and ceiling of Sili Street tomb, Jinan,  
Yuan period. From *Wenwu*, no. 3  
(2004), 64.

The inscriptions in the three tombs are different. The first is short, conveying little more than the most pertinent information: occupant names and places of birth, that their eldest son was in charge of the burial, and when the tomb was sealed. The inscription in the tomb at Hansenzhai reads like a land ownership contract. The information in Li Shujing's inscriptions are more in the manner of Zhang Buhua's, relating who he and his wife were, his official title, and names of his descendants. Li Shujing is the one of the three male tomb occupants whose official status can be confirmed. Although it is often assumed that the cost of a tomb decorated with paintings or relief sculpture precluded anyone but officials from having one, only when we have supporting data from a funerary inscription can we be certain of status. None of the three tomb occupants has a biography in the Yuan standard history (*Yuanshi*), but Li Shujing, who has two walls of figures in landscape in his tomb (figs. 27, 28), is the one with confirmed official status. It seems to follow that his images are the most diverse and complicated, and painted with the most dexterity. The three inscriptions, then, may also inform us about the range of paintings and corresponding social status of tomb occupants in Yuan China. The writing, however, is the clue to ethnicity.

### Sili Street Tomb

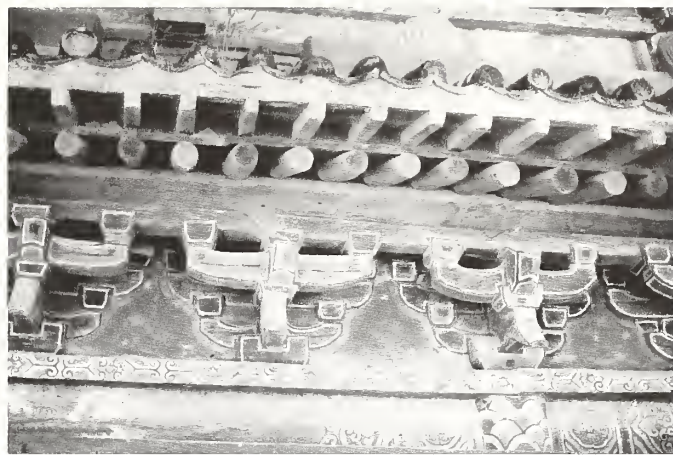
Like the three Yuan tombs with inscriptions, the Sili 司里 Street tomb is a roughly circular, single-chamber, brick structure oriented only slightly (two degrees) west of north.<sup>59</sup> Its domed ceiling had collapsed by the time of excavation. Just over 3 meters in diameter, its interior would have risen 3.33 meters at the highest point. Also like the other Yuan tombs, every wall and ceiling surface was painted. Undated, this recently excavated Jinan tomb is discussed because it confirms that motifs present in the Shaanxi and Hebei tombs extended eastward into Shandong in the Yuan period and because it exemplifies a tomb type common in Jinan through which a more complex image of Yuan funerary painting emerges.

Again the focus of the interior is the wall opposite the entry. Recreated on it is a two-story facade, each level spanning three bays across, with the lower story wider than the upper and the central story bay on the lower level widest of the six. A nearly symmetrical architectural facade is divided into three segments on either side so that the interior gives the impression of being eight sided (fig. 31). More than at the other three tombs, the architectural detail in the Sili Street tomb follows real architecture. The architecture is overwhelming, yet only one clear figure and perhaps two others are present in the paintings.





32A



32B

## 32A, 32B

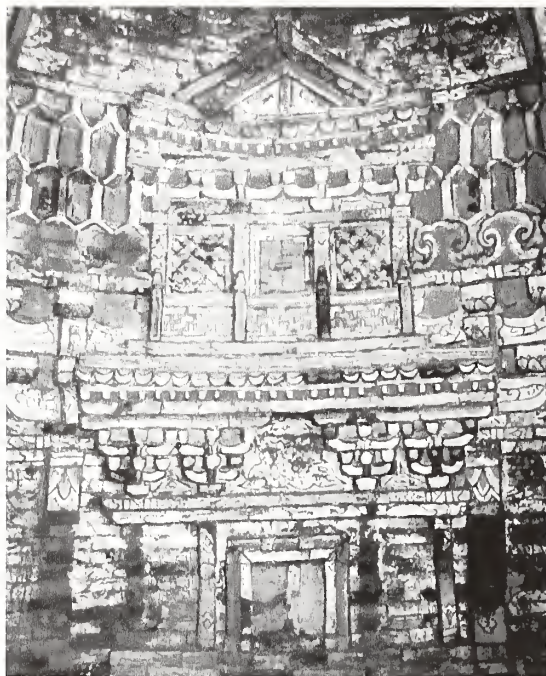
Ciyun Pavilion, Dingxing, Hebei, showing bracketing on upper and lower tiers, 1306. Photo by Nancy Steinhardt.

The figures appear on the lower level of the structure on the north wall. One peers out the two-panel door in its central bay. An image in this position is found on the walls of other Yuan tombs, in the Baisha tombs that have been shown to have other features present in the Yuan tombs discussed here, and in Chinese funerary art a full millennium earlier.<sup>60</sup> Faint lines that may indicate figures stand in front of the windows in the adjacent bays. Other signs of human habitation are the tables and chairs, vessels for food, and clothing rack.

The four pillars that bracket the figure(s) on the north wall support the first story of a multilevel building that resembles a *ge*, or pavilion. The best example of a pavilion from the Yuan period is Ciyunge 慈雲閣 in Dingxing 定興, Hebei, dated 1306.<sup>61</sup> Like the structure painted on the Sili Street tomb wall, the lower story of Ciyunge is wider than the upper one; but it has one feature that is inconsistent with the painted pavilion and pavilions that survive from the tenth and eleventh centuries such as Guanyingge 觀音閣 of Dule 獨樂 Monastery, Puxiangge 普賢閣 of Shanhua 善華 Monastery (restored in the 1950s), and Foxiangge 佛香閣 and the Revolving Sutra Cabinet (Zhuanlunzang 轉輪藏) Pavilion of Longxing 隆興 Monastery.<sup>62</sup> Bracketing of the lower story of Ciyun Pavilion is less complicated than that of the upper story, whereas at all other extant pavilions of the centuries prior to Yuan, and on the walls of this tomb and others from Jinan discussed here, the reverse is true (fig. 32).

In his reconstructions of halls and pavilions of the Yuan capital Daidu, Fu Xian 傅熹年 draws more complicated bracketing beneath the upper eaves of the main audience hall, Daminggong 大明宮, but more complex brackets on the lower story of Yanchun 延春 Pavilion.<sup>63</sup> Presumably both varieties were constructed in the Yuan period. There is no evidence that the pavilion on the north wall of the Sili Street is a copy of a specific structure, but its architectural components are painted with such careful attention to detail that we assume the painter was cognizant of the contemporary construction system or painted from a diagram. This is consistent with our belief that decorative motifs in tombs discussed above were based on actual objects or drawings of them, and thus more evidence that Yuan-period tomb interiors were carefully constructed, and few, if any, of their details should be considered superfluous.

Beginning at the base, the pavilion-like structure stands on a three-tier platform. The only three-level platforms that survive today are beneath imperial archi-



33

33

Pavilion on south wall of Sili Street tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004), 66.



34

34

Detail of Amitufo Hall, Chongfu Monastery, Shou county, Shanxi, 1143. Photo by Nancy Steinhardt.

texture of the Ming and Qing periods, including halls of the Forbidden City, Altar of Heaven complex, Ming and Qing tombs, and Confucian Temple complex in Qufu 曲阜. From textual descriptions such as Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄 (Record of rest from the plow) and Xiao Xun's 蕭洵 *Gugong yilu* 故宮遺錄 (Record of remains of the imperial palaces), we know that the three-tier platform also elevated the most eminent halls of Yuan China.<sup>64</sup> It is not certain if the tomb patron(s) or mural painter(s) understood or intended the meaning of the images, but as has been suggested already, it appears they did. Elevated status of a building in a painting would be a way to enhance the hope for elevated status in the afterlife. The privacy of the afterlife not only offers an opportunity to change one's ethnicity but also to raise one's status, at least symbolically, in ways that might not have been possible in life.<sup>65</sup> The implementation of royal or eminent details in buildings on the walls of a non-imperial tomb is therefore not surprising.

Continuing upward in the Sili Street tomb structure are floral-patterned door pins, close in appearance to the pins in the frame of the door at the Dongguan village tomb. A tiebeam joins the two end beams, and above it is a second tiebeam known as *pupaifang* 普拍枋, observed in eminent architecture in the Tang dynasty. Above the *pupaifang* is the board against which bracket sets are lodged, *gongyanbi* 栱眼壁. The bracket sets are formed of fundamental lateral and perpendicular elements that classify them as five-*puzuo* 鋪作 variety. They also exhibit *jixin* 計心, or "added heart," arms that project vertically to the building facade. Above the bracket sets, a *timu* 替木 (cushion-like brace) is found on either side, above which is another lintel. We find only one set of roof purlins, four-sided in section, above which are *dishui* 滴水, curved eave tiles for catching rain. Then comes the lattice-patterned balustrade that in tenth- and eleventh-century pavilions marks an interior mezzanine level. Above the two-panel door, here closed, flanked by windows with lattice patterns, are four simple bracket sets of the four-*puzuo*, *touxin* 偷心 ("stolen heart," or without the perpendicular bracket arm) variety. The other note-





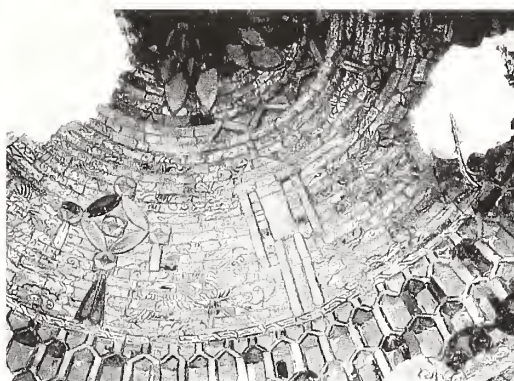
35

35  
Decorative triangle on bracket set board of northeast wall of Sili Street tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004), 66.



36

36  
Decorative triangle on bracket set board of west wall of Tomb No. 1, Baisha. From Su Bai, *Baisha Songmu*, color pl. 2.



37

37  
Ceiling of Sili Street tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004), 67.



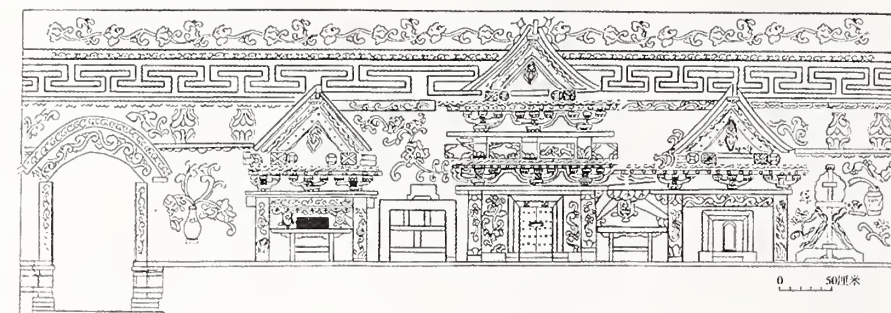
38

38  
Decorative banner from Dunhuang, Tang period. Courtesy British Museum.

worthy feature is the roof, which appears from the gable-end, or sideways. This, we shall see, is also found on architecture painted in other Jinan tomb interiors discussed here. All these architectural components correspond almost one-to-one to those of roughly contemporary buildings. A comparison of the front bay of Amituofo 阿彌陀佛 Hall of Chongfu 崇福 Monastery in Shuo 朔 county, Shanxi, dated 1143, and the central facade on the Sili Street tomb north wall demonstrates the similarities (figs. 33, 34).<sup>66</sup>

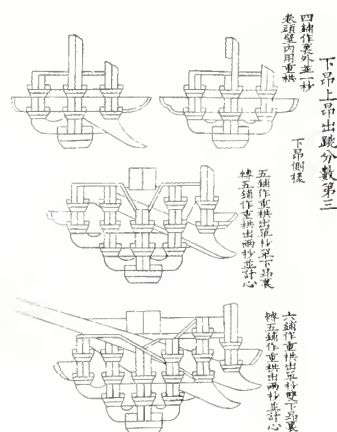
Also evident on the north wall of Sili Street tomb are floral patterns in lobe-shaped triangles (fig. 35). As with so many motifs in the Yuan tombs, Northern Song precedents are easy to find (fig. 36). Other elements mark the Sili Street tomb as Yuan, as well. The trefoil-shaped pattern that separates the top of the wall from the ceiling is one example (see figs. 8, 19, 35). The elongated, six-sided shapes on either side of the upper story of the pavilion in Sili Street tomb, perhaps intended to imitate ceramic roof tiles, is another, a form used in curtains in *Shilin guangji* illustrations and found as background to royal Mongolian donors in the “Yamantaka Mandala” in the Metropolitan Museum (see figs. 7, 22, 33). Also present in the Sili Street tomb are two types of ornaments that alternate with birds on the ceiling: *xiuqiu* 繡球, or banners named for the balls from which further decoration is suspended, and *liusu* 流蘇, tassels, the ornaments with one broad and four narrow hangings (fig. 37). Sources for both shapes are found in actual silk hangings





39

39  
Line drawing of murals in Dawu village tomb, Linzi, Shandong 1357–1364. From *Wenwu*, no. 11 (2005), 45.



40  
Five-puzuo bracketing. From Lie Jie, *Yingzao fashi*, juan 30, 2006 edition, vol. 2, p. 668.

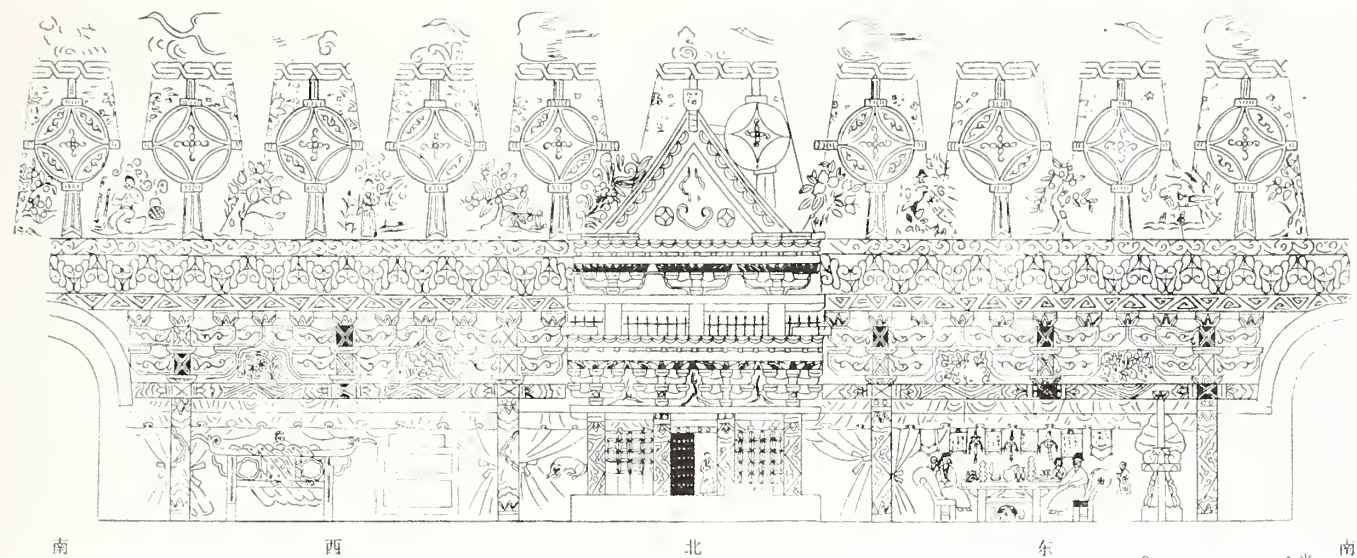
(fig. 38). One wonders if such hangings were suspended from the walls of houses of these tomb builders. Mongols who resided in the capital Daidu hung animal skins on their hall interiors.<sup>67</sup> The imitation silk hangings may reflect wall décor of Chinese families of the period, and thus may be yet more evidence that the occupants of this tomb were Chinese. In addition to ceramics and printed books, banners seem to have inspired interior decoration in Yuan tombs, the original objects perhaps left behind for descendants.

### Dawu Village Tomb

Three of the most recently discovered Yuan tombs show the Sili Street tomb to be typical of the central part of western Shandong. They also turn our attention to issues raised by the tombs with inscriptions.

The first, at Dawu 大武 village, more than a hundred kilometers east of Jinan in Linzi 臨淄, is the least carefully painted of the Shandong group: border patterns between wall and ceiling are formulaic, and in contrast to every other tomb discussed here, part of the wall surface is undecorated. Yet the tomb has two dated inscriptions, 1357 and 1364. The former appears just below the ceiling on the east side of the entry, and the second is found on a tablet painted as if in a niche on the west wall (fig. 39). The second inscription makes reference to the eldest son and an auspicious day. Occupant names may have been included in either or both inscriptions, but they are now lost. Most likely, the years record the dates of the entries of the husband and wife's corpses into the tomb.<sup>68</sup>

The Dawu village tomb is a north-oriented, roughly circular space, between 2.4 and 2.87 meters in diameter, with a domed ceiling rising 3.37 meters. Like the Sili Street tomb, its walls are divided into seven sections plus the entry. No figures are found in the murals. Probably painted quickly, perhaps due to political turmoil in the region in the last decade of Yuan rule, there were neither turning birds nor ceiling hangings. Potted flowers of a kind found in the Hansenzhai tomb are painted on the southwest wall.<sup>69</sup> The two-story structure has simple, one-step bracket clusters on both tiers. The bracket sets have one noteworthy feature: an additional line or lines around their borders, perhaps for decorative effect, perhaps to indicate three-dimensionality, or perhaps to express the kind of color gradation commonly seen in the Baisha tombs (fig. 36) and explained in *Yingzao fashi*; or perhaps the bracket sets on the walls were copied from a version of the text itself, one whose illustrations are as boldly outlined as those on the wall (fig. 40).<sup>70</sup> Each of the three roofs is shown from the gable end. This would be consistent with the presentation in printed books such as *Shilin guangji*. Decorative door pins, with no structural



41

41  
Line drawing of murals in Xincung,  
Jinan, Yuan period. From *Wenwu*, no.  
11 (2005), 54.

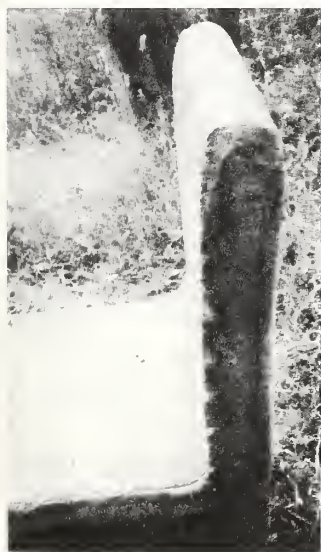
equivalents in extant architecture, are placed above the eaves' gutters of each gable. Even though the craftsmen appear to have been less skilled or, perhaps, worked more quickly than those of the tombs discussed above, decoration in the Dawucun tomb followed the same kinds of models.

### Who Are the Occupants?

Two other tombs in Jinan, without inscriptions, offer clues about their occupants that help assess who would have changed ethnicities in an occupant painting and why. The clues are as explicit as the hat worn by the Dongercun female. A tomb in Xingcun 邢村, Jinan, consisting of an entry ramp and a single, circular chamber, has wall images divided into three main scenes. Upon entry, one sees a two-level pavilion with a figure looking out an open door (fig. 41). The bracket sets, more complex on the lower tier than the upper, are outlined in the manner we have observed at Dawucun. Like the brackets, the figure at the door, occupant couple at a banquet, clothes rack, two-story pavilion, and imitation *xiuqiu* banners all have been seen in other Yuan tombs. The dog or cat on the western side of the north wall is a new feature among the Yuan tombs; a symmetrical animal might have been intended, following the pairing of horses we have observed at Dongercun.

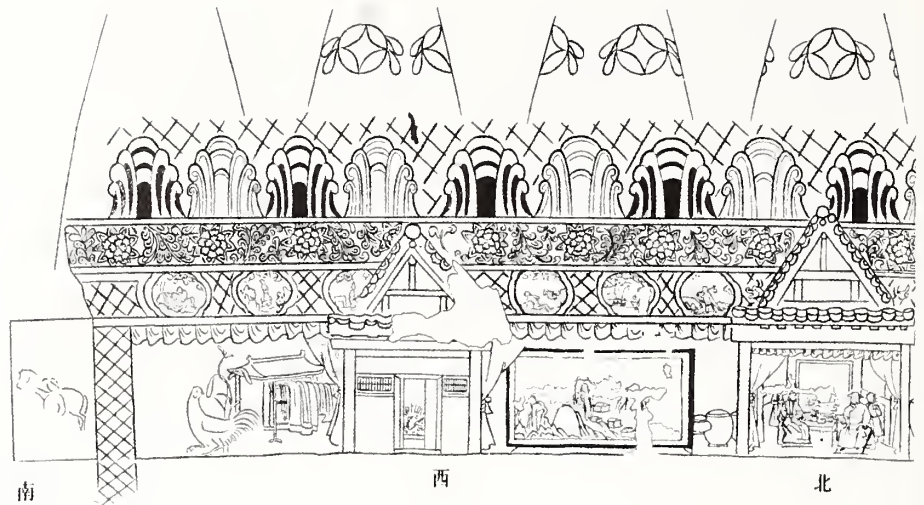
Our interest in this tomb is the occupant painting. Decorated with its own *xiuqiu* and *linsu*, the formal, banquet scene probably was intended to balance the private rooms painted on the west wall where clothing was stored or hung. The male occupant wears the broad-rimmed hat of a Mongol, a type seen in illustrations of Mongols in *Shilin guangji* (fig. 7). Except for a man painted in the lower part of the northeastern side of the ceiling, the other figures on the tomb walls do not wear Mongolian dress or headgear.

More emphatic than the occupant's hat is the contrast between him and the chair on which he sits. Not only is he uncomfortably short for it, the distance between his feet and the floor emphasizes the chair. Its rounded back identifies it as Chinese — as clear a sign as that the hat is Mongolian. In all likelihood, the chair is copied from a stone variety used in south China during the Song dynasty, an example of which has been found in a tomb in Ningbo (fig. 42).<sup>71</sup> The prominence



42  
Stone chair excavated in tomb in  
Ningbo, Song period. From *Wenwu*,  
no. 5 (1997), 43.





43

43  
Line drawing of murals in  
Budongcun, Jinan, Yuan period.  
From *Wenwu*, no. 11 (2005), 62–63.

of the backs of both chairs in this scene suggests they were intended to be noticed. Knowing that at the beginning of the dynasty Chinese tomb builders either were portrayed as Mongols or were not painted in their tombs, here, at the end of the dynasty, a Chinese tomb occupant seems to have retained the headgear of the ruling dynasty, but in other details, allied himself with the Chinese world.

The last tomb, in Budongcun 埠東村, Jinan, is dated to the Yuan period because of its location and decoration. Its murals include elements we have seen in each of the tombs discussed above, and a few details observed in Chifeng tombs that have not been noticed in the more recently uncovered tombs. The roughly circular tomb, oriented ten degrees west of due south and with a diameter of between 2.54 and 3.17 meters, is divided into an entryway that shows only horse and groom and seven other wall scenes (fig. 43). Blank wall space on the opposite side of the entry suggests it was intended for a symmetrical image such as another horse and groom. Facing outward, the horses recall images on entry and exit ramps to tombs of the Liao period often labeled “going out” and “coming in,” references to the passage into and out of the tomb environment.<sup>72</sup> The pair also recalls horse and tree couples that bracket the north wall of the four-sided Tomb No. 2 in Sanyanjing 三眼井, Chifeng. The main scene in the Inner Mongolian tomb, with a central occupant painting flanked by domestic scenes and horses on the far ends, can be seen as an abbreviated version of all seven walls of the Budongcun tomb (figs. 2, 44).

The horse as one of a pair with another horse and/or tree has a long history in Chinese art, and the horse as well as horse-man pairs have political connotations.<sup>73</sup> In the Tang dynasty, a man posed as a groom might be a Chinese official pulling an arrow out of the emperor’s wounded horse or he might be a skilled trainer or stable boy from Western regions. Both Chinese and non-Chinese grooms appear in a lost painting attributed to Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1049–1106), one detail of which was copied by the Yuan painter Zhao Yong 趙雍 (1289–after 1360) in his *Horse and Groom* in the Freer Gallery of Art.<sup>74</sup> In the Yuan dynasty, however, grooms were often Chinese, and, depending on the painter, the portrayal of an official as a stable boy wearing silk could be a reference to the situation to which Chinese officials had been reduced under Mongolian rule. This was true in paintings by Zhao Mengfu 趙





44

44

Painting of tomb occupants, north wall, Budongcun tomb. From *Wenwu*, no. 11 (2005), 66.

孟頫 (1254–1322) and his grandson Zhao Lin 趙麟 (d. ca. 1367), and by Ren Renfa 任仁發 (1255–1328), in which the grooms wear Chinese silken robes.<sup>75</sup>

The groom on the entry wall of the Budongcun tomb wears a Mongol hat. As with other motifs from sources in Chinese painting, printed books, textiles, or ceramics, one cannot be sure if the horse and groom were painted as a standard funerary motif, copied from an available source, or if the patron might have had his own reason to request this image, but the distinctiveness of Mongolian hats, and the clarity with which they are portrayed in all the tombs discussed here, suggest that the Mongolian cap was highly intentional. The figure looking out the door on the east wall of the Budongcun tomb also wears a Mongolian hat, as do the tomb occupant and his servant, but his wife's identity is not revealed by garment or headgear (fig. 44).

The pose of this couple is standard in Yuan tomb painting. They sit on either side of a table with smaller-sized servants to their sides and a screen behind them, all framed by pillars at the sides and curtains above. The screen decoration is too effaced to identify the subject. Landscape screens cover walls to either side of the occupant painting. None has inscriptions. As has been observed in the Dawucun tomb, the architecture is noticeably sketchy or abbreviated in comparison to other tombs discussed above. Gable sides illogically cap building fronts, and here the posts that frame a gable are especially rigid. The area for clothing storage is present, with a sketchy structure behind it on the southwestern section of the tomb and sketchier buildings of unclear purpose on the southeastern wall. The prominent rooster on the southwestern wall seems out of place, although a symmetrical counterpart may have been intended for the space on the southeast. *Xiuqiu* are here, but their streamers are missing. The decorative band across the lower ceiling is the most formulaic among all the tombs discussed here. In contrast to the sketchiness of images, the scant and rigid architectural detail, and blank spaces, the hats worn by the male tomb owner and servant behind him are clearly articulated. Another feature is equally clear: the folding chairs on which the husband and wife sit. The Dongercun couple also sits on folding chairs, as do the occupants in the Yuanbaoshan 元寶山 tomb (figs. 1, 3, 44). It is the same chair on which headless statues



45

45  
Back of stone statue of Mongolian prince-of-the-blood, Shangdu, Duolun, Inner Mongolia. Photo by Nancy Steinhardt.



46

46  
Front view of stone statue of Mongolian prince-of-the-blood, Shangdu, Duolun, Inner Mongolia. Photo by Nancy Steinhardt.

at the Mongolian capital Shangdu 上都 and elsewhere in the lands of the former Mongolian empire, men certain to be Mongols, are seated (fig. 45).<sup>76</sup>

The Mongols did not invent the folding chair,<sup>77</sup> but the portable furniture suited the nomadic lifestyle of the steppe. The statues confirm its use. So far, no Song or Jin tomb occupant sits on one. Occupants at Yuanbaoshan, Dongercun, and Budongcun all sit on folding chairs, and in each tomb, the male wears Mongolian headgear. Only at Dongercun does the woman wear a *boqta*, and only the Mongolian-capped male in Xingcun sits on a Chinese chair.

As we have learned from the inscription at Dongercun, elements of material culture in a painting cannot confirm the ethnicity of the figures they accompany. A Chinese person may wear a Mongolian hat, and there is no reason to presume that a Mongol would not sit in a Chinese chair, or a Chinese in one that folds. Compared to clothing or chairs or other painted or actual objects, inscriptions in the three tombs are the most reliable evidence of occupant ethnicity; and even then one must be cognizant of inscription style to determine an occupant's identity. Given the power of the written word throughout Chinese history, and that these paintings were executed in the century when the Mongols ruled China, one probably should not be surprised that a message veiled by artifacts is revealed in characters.

Knowing that Chinese men and woman are dressed in Mongolian clothing and sit on folding chairs in tombs in Shaanxi and Shandong, and that so far, one cannot confirm the ownership by Mongols of a single tomb believed to have been painted from the 1260s to the 1360s, one has to wonder if tombs with no ancillary writing, even those in areas closer to the lands of Chinggis Khan and Khubilai Khaghan's nativity such as Chifeng county or Liaoning, might also belong to Chinese.<sup>78</sup>



Among all the figures discussed in this study, the only ones we are certain portray Mongols are the statues today at the ruins of the early Yuan capital Shangdu, in present-day Duolun 多倫, Inner Mongolia (figs. 45, 46). Lacking heads, the best information comes from clothing. Each of the three statues in Duolun wears a garment that closes from the left shoulder to the right side (fig. 46). This is the same direction toward which the garment of every other statue from a Yuan site fastens.<sup>79</sup> Male figures in the Yuan-period edition of *Shilin guangji* also all wear garments fastened on their right sides. As suggested above, these popular encyclopedias, intended for non-elite audiences and with illustrations of objects as well as people, may have served as models for wall painters commissioned by Chinese tomb builders during the Yuan period. Thus it is noteworthy that the males in paintings from tombs in Chifeng (figs. 1, 2) wear garments that close to their rights, as does the Budongcun occupant male. Printed books or actual garments may have provided models for painters of cave-temples of the Yuan period. In Mogao Cave 332 at Dunhuang, male garments also close toward the right.<sup>80</sup> Zhang Buhua in the Dongercun tomb is the only male figure discussed here who wears a coat that closes to his left.

One can never be certain of intentions for the postmortem world. Yet if Zhang Buhua is the Chinese man his tomb inscription reveals him to be, then the famous line from Mencius that the *hu* 胡 (barbarians) buttoned their garments on the opposite side of the Chinese is borne out by material evidence.<sup>81</sup>

If there ever was a time in Chinese history when ethnicity mattered, it was the period of Mongolian rule.<sup>82</sup> China had been aware of the spoils and threats at all its borders since the first millennium BCE, and Western Regions and their peoples and ideology, specifically, is a theme that runs the course of Chinese history. The Mongols, however, had a unique policy toward foreigners. Under Mongolian rule, society was divided into four groups, from most- to least-privileged: Mongols, Semu 色目 (peoples of non-Mongol and non-Chinese ethnicity), Han (or Northern) Chinese, and Southern Chinese.<sup>83</sup> The native Mongol population of the empire was small in comparison to the needs of the bureaucracy. Mistrusting the conquered, the Mongols turned to the Semu population to fill the majority of bureaucratic posts. Michael Brose has convincingly argued the importance of Uygurs and Morris Rossabi the large role played by Muslims, both groups Semu, in this endeavor.<sup>84</sup>

A native Chinese who wanted an official position, especially in 1269, early in Khubilai Khaghan's reign, would have greatly enhanced his chances of government service if he were able to rise on the Mongolian ethnic scale from Han Chinese to Semu or, if he could accomplish it, to Mongol. Zhang of Hebei became known as Buhua and called himself *anda*, apparently, to make this opportunity possible.<sup>85</sup> From the information in the Hansenzhai and Dongguancun inscriptions, one assumes that the occupants' children were involved in decisions about tomb deco-



ration and wall writings. Even if the purchase of land for the tomb was initiated by the Han occupant at Hanzenzhai, for example, one cannot be sure that he or the first of a couple to die saw murals in his tomb before his death. A surviving spouse probably did.<sup>86</sup> The formulaic quality of the tombs and their paintings seem to confirm that craftsmen-workshops were responsible for construction and overall, if not specific, decoration. Occupants or their surviving children, however, should have chosen the wording of inscriptions.

Tomb builders and painters from craftsmen-workshops are consistent both with conceptions about Chinese tomb construction through history and with thirteenth–fourteenth-century men and women who place themselves in predominantly Chinese settings with pictorial and material references to funerary interiors of Northern Song China. The decision to dress or sit as Mongols in such settings, or to omit the standard occupant painting, however, are breaks with tradition. Even in times when parts or much of China were ruled by non-Chinese, the period between Han and Sui, and the Liao, Jin, and Qing dynasties, it is unprecedented for the tomb occupant to be portrayed in an ethnicity other than his own.<sup>87</sup>

The desire for a certain level of Mongolness, or at least the willingness to be part of that system, is perhaps evidence of the simultaneous implementation of two of Pierre Bordieu's forms of cultural capital: the institutionalized state in which, in this case, the institutional property of officialdom could be conferred on the Chinese man because he is dressed as a Mongol; and the objectified state, in which cultural goods—those objects painted in the tomb that are purely of Chinese origin—confirm Chinese culture.<sup>88</sup> Through appropriation of all aspects of life, from material objects to dress to government service, the decisions the multinational population of the Mongol empire made were like those of no other times. It was a unique age in China in which aspects of culture were appropriated not only by those at China's borders or those who entered China from outside, but by the Chinese.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, although the political circumstances of Mongolian rule may be more extreme than those under which the majority of tomb builders made decisions in the course of Chinese history, the results of their decisions are reason to question a greatly overused and, it is believed here, often incorrect comment about Chinese tomb interiors. The subjects of murals in Chinese tombs are often referred to as scenes of daily life. In fact, funerary paintings represent an idealized life, showing the interred in their primes; of ideal stature, posture, and weight; in perfect weather conveyed either through props of landscape or screens; and, in the period of Mongolian rule, in the ethnicity they considered ideal for their purposes. Self-representation in a Chinese tomb is highly selective; it is not "portraiture," and the frequently used phrases "occupant portrait" and "funerary portrait" are not found

here.<sup>90</sup> The Chinese tomb is a frozen moment intended to capture either the idealization of what existed in the life of the interred or aspirations for what the occupants or their descendants wish would have existed or hope will exist at a time when the underground environment might be activated.

In China, however, the written word could have the last word so that cultural property did not conceal the true identity of tomb occupants. In Europe in the age of Mongolian rule, Ambrogio Lorenzetti (ca. 1290–1348) painted men who have been identified as Mongols in his *Martyrdom of the Franciscans* in the Basilica of St. Francis in Siena. Hats are used to identify Mongol ethnicity in this painting in the same manner in which they are used in the Chinese murals. In the Italian case, the circumstances are different: the image as shown through cultural property is so strong that Lorenzetti did not need to see a Mongol to paint one. Leonard Olschki has argued he never did.<sup>91</sup> Yet details that define the non-Chinese in Lorenzetti's painting must have come from the same textiles, books, and other portable cultural properties that found their way into Chinese tombs.

In the most prominent place in a tomb in Dongercun, a man who wanted ever after to be known as a sworn Mongolian friend named Zhang Buhua and his wife surnamed Li are depicted for all eternity dressed as Mongols, but otherwise surrounded by the accoutrements of a comfortable Chinese environment. Among the seven tombs studied in Shaanxi, Hebei, and Shandong, this one is unique in the unprecedented measures taken for potential opportunity and success of the occupants or their future line. Perhaps only circumstance as extreme as Mongolian rule could have caused this couple, and probably several buried in Jinan, to disguise their Chinese identities in hopes of a better future. Even though the written word was present to indicate Zhang Buhua's true identity, given the strength of China's image of self, the portrayal is extraordinary.

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## NOTES

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- 1 For the report, see, Wang Xiaomeng 王小明, "Shaanxi Pucheng Dongercun Yuandai bihua mu" 陝西蒲城洞耳村元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan-period tomb with wall paintings in Donger village, Pucheng county, Shaanxi), *Kaogu yu wenwu* 考古與文物, no. 1 (2000): 16–21 and 48.
- 2 This statement is based on my own search for material on Yuan tombs. I am not aware of a published list. A Yuan tomb without murals was found in Xi'an in December 1954. For the publication, see Chen Youwang 陳有旺, "Xi'an Yuxiangmenwai Yuandai zhuanmu qingli jianbao" 西安玉祥門外元代磚墓清理簡報 (Brief report on sorting out a Yuan-period brick tomb outside Yuxiang Gate, Xi'an), *Wenwu* 文物, no. 1 (1959): 32–39. A group of tombs with known occupants, He Ben 賀賁, his son, He Renjie 賀仁傑 (d. 1307), and his grandson, He Sheng 賀勝, was found in Hu 戶 county, Shaanxi, and published as "Shaanxi Huxian Heshimu chutu daliang Yuandai yong" 陝西戶縣賀氏墓出土大量元代俑 (A large number of Yuan tomb figurines excavated from the tombs of the He family in Hu county, Shaanxi), *Wenwu*, no. 4 (1979): 10–16.
- 3 The initial report on this tomb is Sun Fuxi 孫福喜 and Wang Zili 王自力, "Xi'an dongjiao Yuandai bihua mu" 西安東郊元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan-period tomb with murals in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an), *Wenwu*, no. 1 (2004): 62–72. A monograph, *Xi'an Hansenzhai Yuandai bihua mu* 西安韓森寨元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with murals at Hansenzhai, Xi'an) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004), followed.
- 4 Yuan tombs had been found within the city limits of Beijing. On the Zhuo county tomb see, Xu Haifeng 徐海峰, Liu Lianqiang 劉連強, Li Wenlong 李文龍, and Yang Weidong 楊衛東, "Hebei Zhuozhou Yuandai bihua mu" 河北涿州元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with murals in Zhuo county, Hebei), *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004): 42–60.
- 5 Both were published in the same issue of *Wenwu*. On the tomb in Jinan, see, Zhang Shaohui 張幼輝, Shi Yun 史芸, and Liu Shanyi 劉善沂, "Jinanshi Silijie Yuandai zhuandiao bihua mu" 濟南市司里街元代磚雕壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with relief sculpture and murals on Sili Street, Jinan), *Wenwu*, no. 3 (2004): 61–68. Six Yuan tombs were published in *Wenwu*, no. 2 (1992). See Liu Shanyi et al., "Jinan jinnian faxian de Yuandai zhuandiao bihua mu" 濟南近年發現的元代磚雕壁畫墓 (Yuan tombs with relief sculpture and murals excavated in Jinan in recent years), 1–16; and Liu Shanyi, "Jinan Chaiyoujizhuang Yuandai zhuandiao bihua mu" 濟南柴油機廠元代磚雕壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with relief sculpture and murals in Chaiyoujizhuang, Jinan), 17–23.
- 6 The Yuan tomb in Dawu is published in Qin Dashu 秦大樹 and Wei Chengmin 魏成敏, "Shandong Linzi Dawucun Yuanmu fajue jianbao" 山東臨淄大武村元墓發掘簡報 (Brief report on a Yuan tomb excavated in Dawu village, Linzi, Shandong), *Wenwu*, no. 11 (2005): 39–48. Then there are the tombs in Xingcun and Budongcun, discussed in Liu Shanyi and Wang Huiming 王惠明, "Jinanshi Lichengqu Song-Yuan bihuamu" 濟南市歷城區宋元壁畫墓 (Song–Yuan tombs with murals in Licheng district, Jinan) *Wenwu*, no. 11 (2005): 52–71.
- 7 A Yuan tomb with murals, the first known in the region, was reported in Chongqing,



- Sichuan, just as this paper was going to press. I thank Sun Hua 孫華 for this information.
- 8 The image shown as figure 1 even found its way into high school world history textbooks. See R. Bulliet, D. Northrup, and P. Crossley, *The Earth and Its Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p. 352. On Yuan tombs with wall paintings known before 1990, see my “Yuan Period Tombs and Their Decoration: Cases at Chifeng,” *Oriental Art* 36, no. 4 (1990/91): 198–221. A Yuan tomb found in 1989 in Yuanbaoshan, the same district as the tomb shown in figure 1, was published in Liu Bing 劉冰, “Nei Menggu Chifeng Shazishan Yuandai bihua mu” 內蒙古赤峰沙子山元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with murals in Shazishan, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia), *Wenwu*, no. 2 (1992): 24–27.
  - 9 One of the most frequently published tombs with a known occupant belongs to Feng Daozhen 馮道真. This tomb is known for the landscape paintings on its walls. See Datongshi Wenwu Chenlieguan 大同市文物陳列館 and Shanxi Yungang Wenwu Guanlisuo 山西雲岡文物管理所, “Shanxisheng Datongshi Yuandai Feng Daozhen, Wang Qing mu qingli jianbao” 山西省大同市元代馮道真、王青墓清理簡報 (Brief Report on the sorting out of the tombs of Feng Daozhen and Wang Qing of the Yuan dynasty in Datong, Shanxi), *Wenwu*, no. 10 (1962): 34–52.
  - 10 Steinhardt, “Yuan Period Tombs,” compares the headgear and garments of males in the murals to those in figurines and book illustrations known to portray Mongols.
  - 11 To date, no Yuan emperor’s tomb has been discovered. There have been claims of the discovery of the tomb of the dynastic founder, Chinggis Khan (1162–1227), but none has been confirmed. The *Secret History of the Mongols*, surviving in a fourteenth-century Sino-Mongolian version, does not mention a burial site for Chinggis Khan, nor does any historical source record the location of a Yuan ruler’s grave with more details than, for example, that “the solemn caravan transporting his corpse made its way to the Kentei Mountains” (Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], 228, whose source is Song Lian, ed., *Yuanshi*, juan 114 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976], 2873).
  - 12 One of the tombs in this group, at Dawucun, has two dates written on its wall.
  - 13 For Jin dynasty (1115–1234) examples of eight interrelated scenes, see Cui Yunhe 崔元和, ed., *Pingyang Jinmu zhuandiao* 平陽金墓磚雕 (Sculpture from Jin tombs in Pingyang) (Taiyuan: Shanxi Renmin chubanshe, 1999), 218–21.
  - 14 For illustrations of this group of paintings, see *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben: Das Weltreich der Mongolen* (München: Hirmer, 2005), 308–11.
  - 15 On the Baisha tombs, see, Su Bai 宿白, *Baisha Songmu* 白沙宋墓 (Song tombs in Baisha) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002) (reissued based on 1957 edition). Examples of images of male and female occupants from Jin tombs are found in Cui Yunhe, *Pingyang Jinmu*, 132–35 and 138. Examples of male and female occupant paintings in Eastern Han tombs are found in the tomb of Bin Wang 郗王 in Xunyi 旬邑, Shaanxi; and the tomb in Zhu 朱 village, Luoyang, for example. For information on these tombs and illustrations of the occupant pictures, see, Susanne Greiff and Shenping Yin, *Das Grab des Bin Wang: Wandmalereien der Östlichen Han Zeit in China* (Mainz and Wiesbaden: Romisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum und Harrassowitz, 2002), fig. 28; and Huang Minglan 黃明蘭 and Guo Yinqiang 郭引強, *Luoyang Hanmu* 洛陽漢墓壁畫 (Han tomb murals in Luoyang) (Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 190.
  - 16 Bilateral symmetry, of course, is a standard means of rendering formality, order, perfection, and immutability, all appropriate for images intended for eternity. Chinese artisans have used bilateral symmetry since the Han dynasty. On the concept, including its importance to the ancient Greeks, see Hermann Weyl, *Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), esp. 3–33.
  - 17 Portrayal of the occupant in more than one setting — sometimes in continuous narrative — is even more standard in Chinese tomb wall decoration than the use of symmetry. The bibliographies on both Chinese funerary art and wall painting are extensive. For interpretative observations on Chinese tomb decoration in Han and in Tang and Song, see Jessica Rawson, “The Eternal Palaces of the Western Han: A New View of the Universe,” *Artibus Asiae* 59, no. 1–2 (1999): 5–58; and Rawson, “Changes in the Representation of Life and the Afterlife as Illustrated by the Contents of Tombs of the T’ang and Sung Periods,” in *Arts of the Sung and Yüan*, ed. Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), 23–43.
  - 18 First compiled in the late Song by Chen Yuanjing 陳元靚, the encyclopedia, *Shilín guāngjì* 事林廣記, from which figure 7 is taken, was reissued in the Yuan period. Although sponsored by the court, the audience for a compilation like this was more popular than the court. A figure in the painting, “The Demon Queller Zhong Kui,” by Gong Kai 龔開 (1222–ca. 1304) in the Freer Gallery, also wears this hat.
  - 19 Wang Xiaomeng, “Shaanxi Pucheng Dongercun,” 20.
  - 20 The subject is particularly common in tomb painting during the period between

- Han and Tang. See, for example, the rightmost panel (from the front) of the funerary couch excavated in the tomb of An Qie 安伽 in Xi'an in 2001 (published in Shaanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 陝西省考古研究所, *Xi'an Bei Zhou An Qie mu* 西安北周安伽墓 [The tomb of An Qie of Northern Zhou in Xi'an] [Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2003], pl. 74) and images in Twin Pillars Tomb in P'yongyang (published in Kasai Torajiro, *Chōsen koseki zuroku* 朝鮮古跡図録 [Illustrations of remains from ancient Korea] 2 vols. Tokyo: Kokka-sha, 1915], pl. 542), or the back chamber of the Tomb of the Dancers in Ji'an (published in Kyōdo zushinsha, *Kokuri hekiga kofun* 高句麗壁画古墳 [Koguryō mounded tombs with murals] [Tokyo: Kyōdo, 2005], p. 275). On the subject, see Wu Hung, "Where Are They Going? — Hears and 'Soul-carriage' in Han Dynasty Tomb Art," *Orientalism* (June 1998): 22–31.
- 21 Everyone who has looked at this inscription with me has offered suggestions for translation. I thank Christopher Atwood, Bettina Birge, Hok-lam Chan, Benjamin Elman, Michael Lackner, Sonya Lee, Victor Mair, Susan Naquin, Cecelia S. Siegle, Selena Wang, and James Watt for their insights.
- 22 Mark A. Whaley, "An Account of Thirteenth-century Qubchir of the Mongol 'Great Court,'" *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54 (2001): 1–84. I thank Christopher Atwood for this reference.
- 23 Wang Xiaomeng, "Shaanxi Pucheng Dongercun," 18, notes that the two characters appear to be *sisi* 巳巳, for as one observes in figure 9, the *ji* seems to be "closed" (like *si*). Because the combination *sisi* is not possible, the first character must be *ji*.
- 24 Francis Cleaves translates *anda* as "sworn brother" or "oath brother," explaining why in his *Secret History of the Mongols* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 140 and 98ff. Igor de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), chooses "sworn friend." See vol. 2, p. 395. The most famous Mongolian pair of *anda* is Chinggis Khan and Jamuqa.
- 25 According to Cai Zhichun 蔡志純, "Mengguzu" (Mongolian peoples), in *Zhongguoren de xingming* 中國人的姓名 (Surnames and personal names of the Chinese people), ed. Zhang Lianfang 張聯芳 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1992), 130. Zhu, Li, Wang, Zhang, Yang, Bai, An, Ma, Chen Guo, Jiang, Ding, and Ya were the most common Chinese surnames adopted by Mongols during the Yuan period. I thank Hok-lam Chan for this reference.
- 26 I thank Thomas Allsen and Christopher Atwood for helpful communication regarding the name Buhua.
- 27 When Christopher Atwood first urged me to see if one could build a case that the man was Chinese, I was skeptical. I thank him for convincing me to return to the paintings and probe a possibility that led to a conclusion so different from my first impression.
- 28 Christopher Atwood, communication with author, June 20, 2007. It is less rare later in the dynasty than in 1269 for Mongols to adopt Chinese surnames. Most of Cai's evidence in the publication cited in note 25 comes from late in the Yuan period and in the Ming.
- 29 Elizabeth Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- 30 Atwood, communication with author, June 20, 2007.
- 31 Atwood, communication with author, June 20, 2007.
- 32 A similar subtle clue to the occupant's Chinese identity is a play on the word *he*. Jan Stuart notes that the female servant holds a box (*he*) that should be understood as its homophone *he*, meaning peace. See Jan Stuart and Evelyn Rawski, *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Washington, D. C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2001), 42. I thank Virginia Bower for this reference and other helpful discussions. Bower informs me that according to Laurie Barnes, the vessels on the tables may be metal as well as ceramic.
- 33 It is not evident why Li is identified before her husband. Only if the four vertical lines are read left to right does the husband's identification precede the wife's. According to Sonya Lee, the order is not relevant in this kind of inscription, but it may be noteworthy that as the lines appear, the one that refers to Li is above her head and the one referring to Zhang above his.
- 34 Cai Zhichun, "Mengguzu," 130.
- 35 For the precise locations, see Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi dili tuji* 中國歷史地理圖集 (Historical and geographic atlas of China) (Beijing: Ditu chubanshe, 1982), vol. 7, maps 3–4 and 7–8.
- 36 For illustrations of some of the murals from the Pingyang region of Shanxi, see Chai Zejun 柴澤俊, ed. *Shanxi siguan bihua* 山西寺觀壁畫 (Murals from Buddhist and Daoist monasteries in Shanxi) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997).
- 37 On this tomb, see Yang Fudou 楊富斗, "Shanxi Yuncheng Xilizhuang Yuandai bihua mu" 山西運城西里莊元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with murals in Xilizhuang, Yuncheng, Shanxi), *Wenwu*, no. 4 (1988): 76–78 and 90.
- 38 I thank Michael Lackner for this suggestion. Another possibility is that Run Tong, as written on the wall, is the name of the

- eldest son. In that case, the translations would be: “the eldest son, Run Tong, who is in charge of ceremonies, and the women.” I prefer the translation in which the eight characters form four couplets.
- 39 On the Qingming Festival, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Chinese Festivals* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952), 113–27.
- 40 The intent is not to suggest specifically the Baisha tomb as a source. As mentioned in note 15, a presentation of large occupants with smaller servants is found in Chinese funerary art since the Han dynasty. For numerous examples, see Su Bai, ed., *Zhongguo meishu quanji* 中國美術全集 (Universal compendium of Chinese art), *Huihuabian* 繪畫編 (Painting series), vol. 12: *Mushi bishu* 墓室壁畫 (Tomb chamber murals) (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 1989).
- 41 Sources of this motif are extremely wide-ranging. The pair of birds is found, for example, on a Liao headdress discussed in Regula Schorta, ed., *Dragons of Silk, Flowers of Gold: A Group of Liao-Dynasty Textiles at the Abegg-Stiftung* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2007), 180–89; on relief sculpture from the Daoist monastery Fushouxiingyuan dated 1316; and on an embroidered canopy in the Metropolitan Museum. For discussion of the latter two pieces, see, James C. Y. Watt and Anne E. Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 196–99. For more examples of birds turning in flight on Yuan ceramics, see, Mikami Tsugio and Zahuo Press, *Sekai Tōji zenshū* 世界陶磁全集 (Ceramic Art of the World), vol. 13: *Ryū, Kin, Gen* 遼、金、元 (Liao, Jin, Yuan) (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1981), pls. 204, 205, and 206. I thank Virginia Bower for this reference.
- 42 On this tomb, see Yu Hongwei 于宏偉 et al., “Henan Dengfeng Chengnanzhuang Songdai bihuamu” 河南登封城南莊宋代壁畫墓 (A Song dynasty tomb with murals in Chengnan village, Dengfeng, Henan), *Wenwu*, no. 8 (2005): 62–70.
- 43 For more on the discovery of the Yuan boat and its contents, see Zhang Wei 張威, ed., *Suizhong Sandaogang Yuandai chuan* 綏中三道崗元代沉船 (A Yuan-period boat in Sandaogang, Suizhong) (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2001).
- 44 On the *Yingzao fashi*, see Else Glahn, “On the Transmission of the *Ying-tso fa-shih*,” *T’oung Pao* 61 (1975): 232–65. For other illustrations of birds, see Li Jie 李誡, *Yingzao fashi*, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhongguo shuju, 2006), vol. 2, 927–30.
- 45 On the source of figure 22, see Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold*, 95–99. That the same motifs are found across media is not surprising. In China, this has been true since the Warring States period. On this subject, see Colin Mackenzie, “The Influence of Textile Designs on Bronze, Lacquer, and Ceramic Decorative Styles during the Warring States Period,” *Orientalia* 30 (July 1999): 82–91.
- 46 On land contracts of Tang and Song, see Valerie Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China: How Ordinary People Used Contracts, 600–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
- 47 The Dongguan referred to here has the same characters as the village mentioned in the inscription in the Hansenzhai tomb, but they are in different counties of different provinces.
- 48 On Yunjusi, see Wu Yuanzhen 吳元真, ed., *Beijing Yunjusi Shijingshan jiuqing* 北京雲居寺石經山舊影 (Old photographs of Yunju Monastery, sutras carved in stone, and the mountain [outside] Beijing) (Beijing: Beijing Tushuguan chubanshe, 2004) and Liu Yajun, *Tushuo Fangshan wenwu* (Beijing: Beijing Yanshan chubanshe, 2005).
- 49 On the house in Gaoping county, see Zhang Guangshan 張廣善, “Gaoping xian, Yuandai minzhu — Wozhai” 高平縣元代民居——姬宅 (Wozhai: A family residence of the Yuan in Gaoping county), *Wenwu shijie* 文物世界, no. 3 (1993): 29–33.
- 50 Captions mention that these are filial piety scenes. Xu Haifeng et al., “Hebei Zhuozhou,” 48 and 53.
- 51 The bibliography on Yonglegong is long. Fairly complete sets of illustrations of murals from the four Yuan structures are found in *Yonglegong bishu xuanji* 永樂宮壁畫選集 (Selection of Yonglegong murals) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1958); and Jin Weinuo 金維農, ed., *Yonglegong bishu quanji* 永樂宮壁畫全集 (Complete record of Yonglegong murals) (Tianjin: Tianjin Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1997). The walls of Chunyang 純陽 and Chongyang 重陽 halls have cartouches with inscriptions that correspond to their main scenes, a feature not present in Dongguancun tomb. Filial piety scenes are frequent in Jin tombs, although they are rarely in landscape settings. For examples see Cui Yunhe, *Pingyang Jinmu*, 234–61.
- 52 For an illustration, see *Eirakukyū lekiga* 永樂宮壁畫 (Yonglegong wall paintings) (Kyoto: Chūgoku gaibun shuppansha, 1981), pl. 98.
- 53 On this painting, see Kojiro Tomita, “Scroll of the ‘Nine Songs of Ch’ü Yüan,’” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 35 (October 1937): 60–68.
- 54 According to Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), entry 514, *chengdelang* 承德郎 can be translated Gentleman for Fostering Virtue and was a title for officials of 7ai rank in the Jin dynasty and 6a rank afterward.
- 55 This title and, as we shall see, the next one confirm that Li had worked in the capital. Zhuozhou was at the southernmost tip of



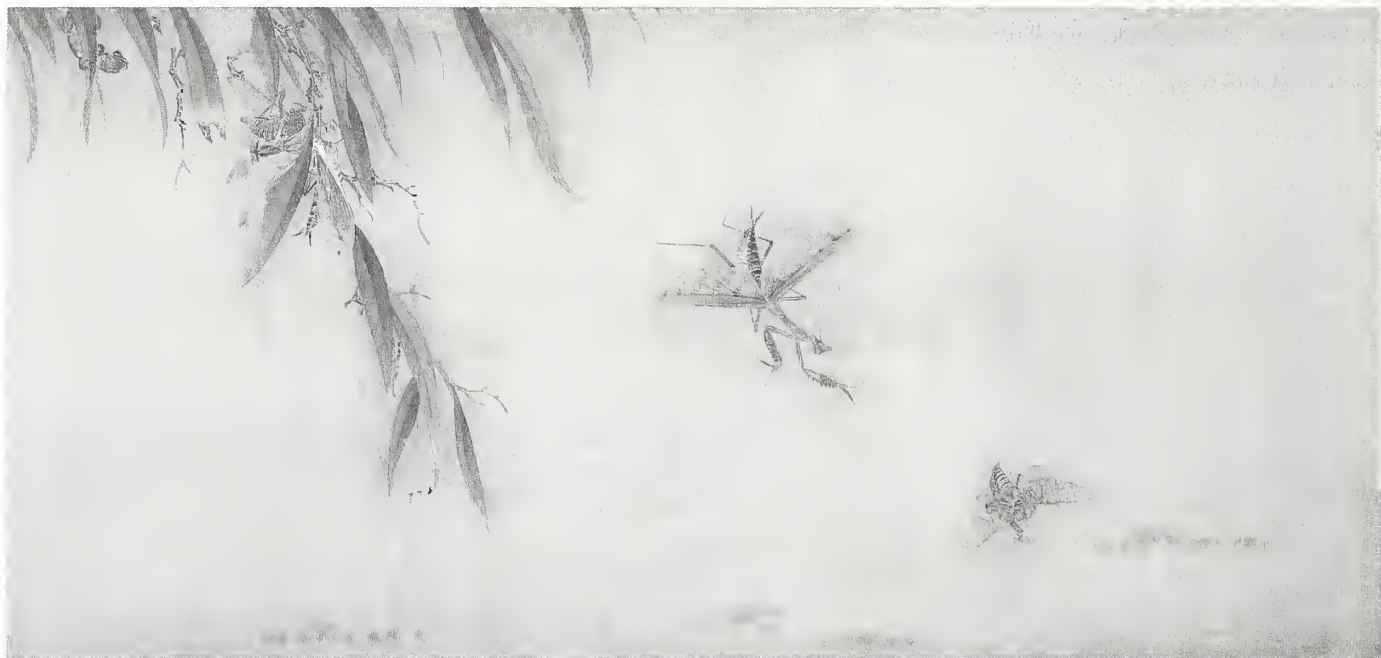
- the Daidu circuit. For a map of Daidulu and its environs, see Tan Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*, vol. 7, map 7–8.
- 56 Administrative assistant, also according to Hucker, *Official Titles*, entry 2089. Again, this is a Jin title, of rank 5b, granted to a staff assistant to the governor of the *fu* 府 (superior prefecture) in which the dynastic capital was located. It was also a Yuan title, the number and rank of which are not clear in *Yuanshi*.
- 57 The character used is *zao* 造 (built) rather than one that might refer to the writing of the inscription.
- 58 Wu Hung, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 189–250, includes comparable passages from funerary inscriptions and monuments of the Han period. For more on *muzhi* 墓誌, or funerary inscriptions, see Zhao Chao 趙超, “Muzhi suyuan” 墓誌溯源 (Tracing the origins of funerary inscriptions) *Wenshi* 文史 21 (1983): 43–55.
- 59 It is hard to tell if the Sili Street tomb was planned as circular or eight-sided. Sometimes the sides of an octagon are not straight and other times, builders are not able to form a circle, so some straight edges are made. For examples of this phenomenon in Liao times, see Xiang Chunsong 項春松, “Zhaomeng diqu de Liaodai muzang” 昭盟地區的遼代墓葬 (Liao-period tombs in “Zhaomeng”), *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu* 內蒙古文物考古 1 (1981), 75.
- 60 Other Yuan examples are found in tombs excavated in Fujiadun 富家屯, Liaoning, and Haojiazhuang 郝家莊, Shanxi. For illustrations, see *Wenwu*, no. 6 (1985): 57, fig. 3; and *Wenwu*, no. 7 (1987), pl. 8, fig. 1. For an illustration of the figure at Baisha, see Su Bai, *Baisha Songmu*, color pl. 7 and pls. 34 and 43. For an example from the Han dynasty in Sichuan, see the cover of Gao Wen 高文, *Sichuan Handai shiguan huaxiang ji* 四川漢代石棺畫像集 (Collection of imagery on stone sarcophaguses of the Han dynasty in Sichuan) (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1998).
- 61 On Ciyun Pavilion, see Liu Dunzhen 劉敦楨, “Hebeisheng xibu gujianzhu diaocha jilüe” 河北省西部古建築調查紀略 (Notes on the investigation of ancient architecture in western Hebei), *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan* 中國營造學社會刊 5, no. 4 (1935): 6–10.
- 62 On Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery in Ji county, Hebei, dated 984, see Zhongguo Wenwu Yanjiusuo 中國文物研究所 and Tianjin Wenwu Guanli Zhongxin 天津文物管理重心, *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu: Jixian Dulesi* 中國古代建築：薊縣獨樂寺 (Ancient Chinese architecture: Dule Monastery in Ji county) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007); and Liang Sicheng 梁思成, “Jixian Dulesi Guanying, Shanmen kao” 薊縣獨樂寺觀音閣山門考 (Research on Guanyin Pavilion and the Gate at Dule Monastery, Ji county), *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan* 3, no. 2 (1932): 1–92. On Puxian 普賢 Pavilion, see Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen, “Datong gujianzhu diaocha baogao” 大同古建築調查報告 (Report on the investigation of ancient architecture in Datong), *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan* 4, no. 3–4 (1934): 103–11. On the pavilions of Longxing Monastery, see Zhang Xiusheng 張秀生 et al., *Zhengding Longxingsi* 正定隆興寺 (Longxing Monastery in Zhengding) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2000). For additional discussion and bibliography on each, see the relevant sections of Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997), 40–53, 147–49, 197–99.
- 63 See Fu Xinian, “Yuan Daidu danei gongdian de fuyuan yanjiu” 元大都大內宮殿的復原研究 (Research on the reconstruction of palatial halls of the palace-city of Yuan Daidu), in *Fu Xinian jianzhushi lunwen ji* 傅熹年建築史論文集 (Collected essays on architectural history by Fu Xinian) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), 326–56.
- 64 Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀, *Chuogeng lu* 輟耕錄 (Record of rest from the plow), ca. 1366 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1959), *juan* 21, p. 251; and Xiao Xun 蕭洵, *Gugong yilu* 故宮遺錄 (Record of remains of the imperial palaces), ca. 1396 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1963), 1.
- 65 Members of the consort clan Xiao did this under Liao rule. Architectural details of their tombs represent higher status than details in the tombs of the ruling clan, Yelü. For an explanation, see Steinhardt, *Liao Architecture*, 294–306.
- 66 Although it is likely that the Amitufo Hall was built a century and a half before Sili Street tomb was painted, I choose it for comparison for two reasons. First, it is one of the best studied Chinese buildings dated between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, the subject of its own monograph, and the main building discussed in the major study of the monastery. Second, Amitufo Hall has the same bracket-set types, five *puzuo* with *jixin*, found in the mural. For more on Amitufo Hall, see Chai Zejun and Li Zhengyun, eds., *Shuozhou Chongfusi Mituodian xiushan gongcheng baogao* 朔州崇福寺彌陀殿修繕工程報告 (Report on the restoration work at Mituo [short for Amitufo] Hall, Chongfu Monastery, Shuo prefecture) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993); and on the monastery, Chai Zejun, *Shuozhou Chongfusi* 朔州崇福寺 (Chongfu Monastery in Shuo prefecture) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996).
- 67 Paul Ratchenevsky, “Über den mongolischen Kult am Hofe der Grosskhane in China,” in *Mongolian Studies*, ed. Louis

- Ligeti (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1970), 417–43.
- 68 Qin Dashu and Wei Chengmin, “Shandong Linzi,” 43.
- 69 For illustrations from the Hansenzhai tomb, see *Xian Hansenzhai*, 16 and 31; for more details of the flowers at the Dawucun tomb, see Qin and Wei, “Shandong Linzi,” 41 and 44.
- 70 For a labeled diagram of the color gradations, see Li Jie, *Yingzao fashi*, vol. 2, 894–905. Note the thickness of the outline in figure 40.
- 71 Chen Zengbi 陳增弼, “Ningbo Song yi yanjiu” 寧波宋椅研究 (Research on Song chairs from Ningbo), *Wenwu*, no. 5 (1997): 42–48 and 83.
- 72 The images are common in Liao tombs. They occur in the tomb of the Princess of Chen and several of the tombs in the Kulunqi 庫倫旗 cemetery. For illustrations, see Nei Menggu Zizhiqiu Wenwu Kaogu Yanjusu 內蒙古自治區文物考古研究所 and Zhelimumeng Bowuguan 哲里木盟博物館, *Liao Chenguo gongzhu mu* 遼陳國公主墓 (Tomb of the Princess of the Chen state of Liao) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993), foldouts between p. 8 and p. 9 and pls. 1 and 2 and Wang Jianqun 王健群 and Chen Xiangwei 陳相偉, *Kulun Liaodai bihuamu* 庫倫遼代壁畫墓 (Liao tombs with murals in Kulun [Banner]) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), foldout between p. 22 and p. 23.
- 73 The alternating horse and tree are one of the images associated with Han art. Engraved funerary slabs in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, are an example. On the symbolism of the horse, see Robert Harrist, *Power and Virtue: The Horse in Chinese Art* (New York: China Institute, 1997); and Harrist, “The Legacy of Bole: Physiognomy and Horses in Chinese Art,” *Artibus Asiae* 57, no. 1–2 (1997): 135–56; and *Imperial China: the Art of the Horse in Chinese History* (Lexington: Kentucky Horse Park, 2000).
- 74 For an illustration, see Thomas Lawton, *Chinese Figure Painting* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1973), 174.
- 75 For illustrations of the Li Gonglin painting, at one time in a private collection in Tokyo, see Osvald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1956), vol. 3, pls. 191–92; on the Zhao painting of horses and their grooms, and its inscriptions, see Chu-ting Li, “Grooms and Horses by Three Members of the Chao Family,” in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, ed. Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 199–219; on a Ren Renfa painting with Chinese grooms, see Wai-kam Ho et al., *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), 115–19, although since Ren Renfa served the Mongolian government, the political implications of his paintings are not as certain as those of other Yuan painters; and on overt and covert symbolism in Yuan painting, including paintings of horses, see James Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1976), 3–37.
- 76 For a study of these statues, see P. S. Vasil’evskii, *Drevnie Kul’tury Mongolii* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences, 1985), 148–59; and Gai Shanlin 蓋山林, ed., *Mengguzu wenwu yu kaogu yanjiu* 蒙古族文物與考古研究 (Research on the Cultural Relics and Archaeology of the Mongolian People) (Shenyang: Liaoning Renmin chubanshe, 1999), 345–55.
- 77 For an early study of chairs in China, see C. P. Fitzgerald, *Barbarian Beds: The Origin of the Chair in China* (London: Cresset Press, 1965). For more recent studies, see Wang Shixiang, *Classic Chinese Furniture: Ming and Qing Dynasties*, trans. Sarah Handler (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Company, 1986); and Handler, *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), although both of these works focus on chairs after the Yuan dynasty.
- 78 Tombs without inscriptions that include paintings of males dressed as Mongols are published in: “Shanxi Wenshui Beiyukou de yizuo gumu” 山西文水北峪口的一座古墓 (An old tomb in Beiyukou, Wenshui, Shanxi), *Kaogu* 考古, no. 3 (1961): 136–38; Xiang Chunsong 項春松 and Wang Jianguo 王健國, “Nei Menggu Zhaomeng Chifeng Sanyanjing Yuandai muzang bihua” 內蒙昭盟赤峰三眼井元代壁畫墓 (A tomb with murals at Sanyanjing, Chifeng county, Zhaomeng banner, Inner Mongolia) *Wenwu*, no. 1 (1982): 54–57 (source of figure 2); Xiang Chunsong, “Nei Menggu Chifengshi Yuanbaoshan Yuandai bihua mu” 內蒙古赤峰市元寶山元代壁畫墓 (A Yuan tomb with murals at Yuanbaoshan, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia), *Wenwu*, no. 4 (1983): 40–46 (source of figure 1); “Lingyuan Fujiadun Yuanmu” 凌源富家屯元墓 (A Yuan tomb in Fujiadun, Lingyuan), *Wenwu*, no. 6 (1985): 55–64 and 74; and Liu Bing, “Nei Menggu Chifeng Shazishan.”
- 79 The statues have been moved from their original sites. See Wei Jian and Li Xingsheng, “Zhenglanqi Niuqunmiao Yuandai jisi yizhi ji muzang” 正藍旗羊群廟元代祭祀遺址墓葬 (Remains of a Yuan ritual site and tomb group at Niuqunmiao, Zhenglanqi), in *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu wenji* 1, ed. Li Yiyou and Wei Jian (Beijing: Zhongguo Dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1994), 610–21. For additional examples, see Vasil’evskii, *Drevnie Kul’tury Mongolii*, 148–59; Gai Shanlin, *Mengguzu wenwu*, 345–55; and Wei Jian 魏堅 and Cheng Yongzhi 陳永志, “Zhenglanqi Niuqunmiao shidiao xiang

- yanjiu” 正藍旗羊群廟石雕像研究 (Research on stone carved images from Niuqunmiao, Zhenglanqi), in *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu wenji* 1, eds. Li Yiyou 李逸友 and Wei Jian (Beijing: Zhongguo Dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1994), 622–29.
- 80 For illustrations, see Xi Nai 夏鼐 et al., eds. *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogao* 中國石窟：敦煌莫高窟 (Chinese rock-carved caves: Dunhuang Mogao caves), vol. 5 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pls. 161 and 162.
- 81 This point is also made by Lynette Sue-ling Gremli concerning Liao garments. See Schorta, ed., *Dragons of Silk*, 34–35. Standard references on Chinese costumes are Zhou Xun 周洵 et al., *Zhongguo gudai fushi daguan* 中國古代服飾大觀 (Compendium of ancient Chinese costumes) (Chongqing: Xinhua shudian 1994); Zhou Xun et al., *Zhongguo lidai fushi* 中國歷代服飾 (Chinese costumes through the ages) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1997); and Gao Chunming 高春明, *Zhongguo fushi* 中國服飾 (Chinese costumes) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2001).
- 82 Although Frank Dikötter sees racial identity as primarily an early modern phenomenon in East Asia (see his “Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations,” in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter [Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997]), it was very much a central issue in Yuan China.
- 83 These distinctions are explained in almost any history of the period of Mongolian rule. See, for example, John D. Langlois, ed. *China Under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3–16; and Chen Yuan, *Western and Central Asians in China Under the Mongols* (Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica at the University of California, 1966).
- 84 Michael Brose, *Subjects and Masters: Uyghurs in the Mongol Empire* (Western Washington University: Center for East Asian Studies, 2007); and Morris Rossabi, “The Muslims in the Early Yuan Dynasty,” in *China Under Mongol Rule*, 257–95. I thank Michael Brose for helpful conversations on this subject and for suggesting bibliography.
- 85 Bettine Birge suggests I should consider whether the interred couple at Dongercun might have been Semu.
- 86 We await a study of the process through which non-imperial tomb builders determined the plans and decoration of their tombs. To date, information about tombs of the kind discussed here is based largely on assumptions such as those presented in this paragraph.
- 87 There are countless examples of non-Chinese, particularly seminomadic aspirants to Chinese-style life, taking on motifs or images (*xiang* 像) clearly identifiable as Chinese. The use of the four directional animals (*sishen* 四神) in Koguryo tombs is an example. Use of Chinese architecture in capitals and tombs of the Liao and Jin are other examples. On these two subjects, see my, “Changchuan Tomb No. 1 and Its North Asian Context,” *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 4, no. 1–2 (2003): 1–67; and “A Jin Hall at Jingtusi: Architecture in Search of Identity,” *Ars Orientalis* 33 (2003): 77–119. On the potency of *xiang* for adaptation among Han and non-Han ethnicities, see Stanley Abe, *Ordinary Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3–9.
- 88 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58.
- 89 Thomas Allsen, “Ever Closer Encounters: The Appropriation of Cultures and the Apportionment of Peoples in the Mongol Empire,” *Journal of Premodern History* 1, no. 1 (1997): 2–23; and Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 90 In recent years, writing about Chan/Zen paintings of monks has been careful to avoid the use of the word “portrait,” as well. The title and catalogue, Gregory Levine, Yukio Lippit, et al., *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (New York: Japan Society, 2007), is an example; and other writings of Lippit take care to address verisimilitude as opposed to likeness or portraiture. Portraiture does exist in China and Japan, but the paintings of Yuan tomb occupants do not fit into this framework. For a study of what portraiture is in China, see Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. 1–27; on Chan or Zen portraiture, in addition to Levine and Lippit, see the many writings by Helmut Brinker, such as Brinker et al., *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings* (Zürich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1996). Paintings on Chinese tomb walls are at least as restrictive as most groups of funerary portraiture. On this subject and the group from Roman Egypt, see Susan Walker, ed. *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000). Among all these types, Chinese, East Asian Buddhist, or funerary, in no case, except the paintings discussed here, is there evidence of a change in ethnicity in representation for the afterlife.
- 91 Leonard Olschki, “Asiatic Exoticism in Italian Art of the Early Renaissance,” *Art Bulletin* 26, no. 2 (1944): 95–106. A recent article that summarizes earlier research on this painting is S. Maureen Burke, “The Martyrdom of the Franciscans’ by Ambrogio Lorenzetti,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 65, no. 4 (2002): 460–92. The painting is illustrated in both articles.







## THE ELEGIAC CICADA

*Problems of Historical Interpretation of Yuan Painting*

1  
 “A Mantis Assaulting a Cicada,  
 Watched by a Lizard,” middle section  
 of the *World of Vitality*, 1321, color  
 on silk, 12 ft. x 11 in. Courtesy of the  
 British Museum.

TO SPEAK OF VIOLENCE in Yuan painting is tantamount to evoking an oxymoron. With its prevalent tranquil and transcendent mood, Yuan painting appears to have demonstrably little to do with violence. Or so it seems. The impression, however, is premised upon the canonical construct of “Yuan painting.” We typically flaunt Ni Zan’s landscape as the benchmark for the quintessential Yuan painting while excluding its antithesis as marginal and accidental accessories that happened to date from the Yuan period. The truth of the matter is that the Yuan painting encompasses a spectrum of different pictorial moods — some of them downright “violent.”

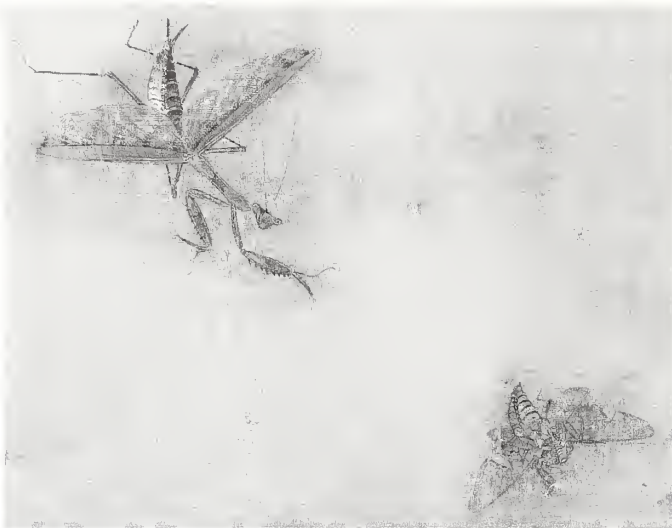
A painting entitled *World of Vitality*, dated 1321, now in the British Museum, is one such telling example.<sup>1</sup> It contains a set of scenes, mostly insects and flowers, with insects at times preying on one another. Most ominous is the scene in the middle of the scroll (fig. 1). We are treated to a rather intense battle scene, albeit one that is waged among insects and birds. A cicada is reeling and smarting from a recent attack, as indicated by its dented and broken wings. Sure enough, a praying mantis is preying on its victim (fig. 2). As we move toward the left, in accordance with the way a traditional scroll painting unfolds, we realize that the scene we have just witnessed in fact follows a prior action, high on a willow tree. There, the praying mantis has the cicada between its claws. Enjoying its catch, the victor is oblivious, however, to the danger it puts itself in. Behind the scramble on the tree lurks a lizard, which is presumably going to have the last laugh (fig. 3).

This scene is only one of the many fights and perils. Starting from the right, the scroll features a dragonfly making off with a moss, a toad eyeing a butterfly, a mantis swooping down on another, a snail nibbling at a cabbage, a mantis chasing after an injured cicada with tattered wings, and a cicada being attacked on a willow tree while a lizard nearby awaits its own chance of making a killing; the rest of the scroll is taken up by scenes of bees, butterflies, and mantis amidst flowers.

Since the mantis attacking a cicada appears twice, and the scene occupies the middle portion of the scroll, we have good reason to regard it as the central action of the scroll. That the scene repeatedly appears in other Yuan paintings and even in Yuan-period porcelain design (fig. 4) makes it all the more topically pressing for explanation.

The *World of Vitality* is not an isolated case. A Yuan painting preserved in the early Qing imperial collection bears the inscription by Ding Henian 丁鶴年 (1335–1424) that explicitly laments the cicada’s doomed fate: “Nowhere can it dodge the mantis’ [menace]” 無處避螳螂.<sup>2</sup> An album leaf, titled *A Copy of the Yuan Painting of Catching a Cicada* 臨元人捕蟬圖 (fig. 5), produced by the early Qing painter Jiang Tingxi (1669–1732),<sup>3</sup> shows a similar preying scene. In light of the *World of Vitality*, it is conceivable that Jiang Tingxi’s painting indeed preserves a Yuan composition.





2



3

2  
“A Praying Mantis Attacking a Cicada,” detail of the *World of Vitality*, fig. 1.

3  
“A Lizard Watching the Praying Mantis’ Attack on a Cicada,” detail of the *World of Vitality*, fig. 1.



4  
“Mantis and Cicada,” detail of double-gourd porcelain vase, Yuan dynasty, mid-14th century, H. 60.5 cm. Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul. From Roderick Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, p. 65, pl. 18c.

The *World of Vitality* also serves as a Yuan-period benchmark in light of which some Ming paintings of mantis preying on cicada can be seen as iconographic derivatives, such as the painting by Zhu Lang (16th c.). The Yuan porcelain design further testifies to the currency of the scene in the Yuan pictorial imagination.

The scenario of a mantis catching a cicada alludes to a parable from the *Zhuangzi*. A jay from the south catches Zhuangzi’s attention when he tours a chestnut grove. In spite of its big wings, the bird cannot fly far. Nor are its large eyes sharp. As Zhuangzi aims his crossbow at it, he sees a cicada getting comfortable in the shade while forgetting its vulnerability to predators. Sure enough, a mantis lying in ambush catches the cicada. Enjoying its catch, the mantis repeats the same mistake made by its victim. It is, in turn, seized by the jay. Having witnessed the tragic event, Zhuangzi laments the pathos attending the natural scheme of things in which one species preys on another. Unsettled by this epiphany, he discards his bow. The garden keeper chases and chastises him, thinking that he has stolen some chestnuts.<sup>4</sup> Over the centuries, the parable has evolved into a commonplace: namely, as the mantis catches the cicada, so the jay follows on its heels 螳螂捕蟬黃雀在後 (i.e., it will not be long before the mantis has its own turn being victimized). The image carries a cautionary and, indeed, ominous overtone.

It is not entirely clear whether there is any iconographic precedent for the 1321 painting. Received texts record a certain *Picture of Cicada(s) and Bird(s)* 蟬雀圖 dating from the fifth century.<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely, however, that the title suggests a picture of the proverbial jay waiting for its turn to ensnare the mantis intent on attacking a cicada. Most likely, the fifth-century composition juxtaposes the sparrow and the cicada in accord with the period taste for the parallel verse pattern and in the manner of couplets featuring both the cicada and the sparrow, as evidenced in the couplet by Jiang Zhong 江總 (519–594):

The startled bird suspects the approaching of dawn;  
The crying cicadas appear to strike a chilling note.<sup>6</sup>

雀驚疑欲曙  
蟬噪似含涼

This is probably the type of textual cue embedded in the mural in the early eighth-century tomb of Prince Zhanghuai (fig. 6).



5

5  
Jiang Tingxi (1669–1732), Copy of  
*Yuan Painting of Catching a Cicada*,  
ink on paper, 21.5 x 14 cm. Courtesy of  
National Palace Museum, Taipei.



6

6  
“Ladies Observing a Flying Bird  
and Catching a Cicada,” mural from  
tomb of Prince Zhanghuai, early 8th  
century, Xi’an. From *Zhongguo lidai  
yishu huihua bian*, ed. Chen Yunhe  
(Beijing: Zhongguo renmin meishu  
chubanshe, 1994), p. 172, pl. 145.

Earlier pictures of cicadas do not have ominous overtones. The iconographic convention of picturing cicadas, based on surviving examples, gravitates toward a rather dignifying use of the image. Drawing on the common perception of the cicada as a dew-drinking and high-stationed creature unsullied by the muddy mundane world, medieval Chinese cicada images often showcase twin traits associated with them: purity and height. The cicada’s purity is attributed to its perceived habit of subsisting on dews. Its association with high station stems from its perch on treetops. These qualities account for the cicada image in the traditional design of the official regalia. The subtext is that “the cicada has five virtues ... [when it is] applied to a headgear, the latter takes on its visage.”<sup>7</sup> Archeological discoveries corroborate the textual account. Headgears from the tombs of medieval nobility feature the image of a cicada with a pair of prominent eyes carved on sheets of gold. The design visualizes the analogy that a discerning, high-ranking official should resemble a cicada “residing on the high and keeping a pure diet, with its eyes under the armpits.”<sup>8</sup> The image symbolizes the virtues of a culturally refined but unassuming ruler fully cognizant of changes around him.<sup>9</sup> This accounts for the cicada image as the most prominent emblem featured on the imperial crown in the *Emperors of the Successive Dynasties* (fig. 7). Apparently, at this stage, the cicada has not yet cut the sorry figure of pathos we come to know later. By contrast, the Yuan-period, mantis-preying-on-cicada painting (fig. 1) signals a different turn in the use of the cicada image in pictorial representation.

The currency of the cicada in Yuan painting needs to be accounted for. Traditional art catalogues, treatises, connoisseur manuals, and art criticism offer little





7A



7B

7A, 7B

"Portrait of Sima Yan, Emperor Wu of Jin," detail of the *Emperors of Kings of the Successive Dynasties*, attributed to Yan Liben, later copy of a 7th century painting. 51.3 x 53.1 cm (20 3/16 x 20 9 1/16 in.). Photograph © 2008 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Denman Waldo Ross Collection; 7a. "Cicada on Emperor Wu's Crown," detail of *Emperors and Kings of the Successive Dynasties*. Photograph © 2008 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

help in this regard. The story line that emerges therein is so preoccupied with narrating the genealogy of the birds-and-flower or the plants-and-insect genres that it quite matter-of-factly glosses over any ominous edginess in display in the mantis-and-cicada painting. Moreover, if we consider traditional scroll paintings as mostly done for salutary purposes — celebrating birthdays and career promotions, etc. — it would be hard to imagine a patron finding such an ominous image palatable and flattering. With little fungibility in the art market, the scroll was presumably produced to communicate something in a way that a conventional salutary painting does not. The question is then: What does the painting convey?

From the inscription and the seal we know that the painting was produced by a certain Chufang, probably Xie Chufang 謝楚芳, about whom we know nothing, in the spring of 1321 for Dashan 達善, who was probably Zhang Xu 張盥.<sup>10</sup> A scholar of Neo-Confucianism à la Zhu Xi (1130–1200), Zhang Xu was appointed the Educational Official of Jiangning in the Zhiyuan reign (1335–1340) and commanded a wide following.<sup>11</sup>

The scroll bears a series of colophons in verse written by the painter's contemporaries. They are:

1. Songhua Daoren 松花道人 (The pine flower Daoist), who has not been identified.
2. Chen Shen 陳深 (1260–1344), a Song loyalist, or "leftover subject," from Suzhou.<sup>12</sup> Chen Shen remained a determined hermit, refusing to serve the Yuan government.<sup>13</sup>
3. Chen Zhi 陳植 (1293–1362), son of Chen Shen. Following his father's example, Chen Zhi also declined to serve the Yuan government.<sup>14</sup>
4. Feng Mian 馮勉 (dates unknown), the highest-ranking passer of the Provincial Examination of the Jiangsu-Zhejiang region in 1329. It is



notable that Feng Mian, according to Whitfield, impressed his seal “in green ink instead of the customary cinnabar red, probably indicating that he was in mourning at the time of writing.”<sup>15</sup>

5. Yuan Cheng 袁誠 (dates unknown), of Ningbo.<sup>16</sup>

All the colophon writers see in the microcosm of insects an allegorical version of the human world where individuals pursue their own interests at the expense of others (“Hiding and spying, ambushing, they prey on one another”). Only the last colophon writer focuses on the visual drama of the mantis preying on the cicada:

Sipping dew, the shy cicada has its own lofty purity.  
But how can the mantis be formidable enough?  
The oriole is just behind, though the mantis is still unaware.  
Unreasonable and reckless, those who are so crafty and bold,  
To turn and look at this should make one think again.<sup>17</sup>

The last couplet cited here has a rather stern tone. Who are the “crafty and bold” to whom the painting serves an ominous warning? Some privately shared knowledge and circumstances are lost on us.

Any attempt to explicate the painting based solely on these colophons is bound to be frustrated. For one thing, following the customary generic convention of colophon writing, the writers seize any motif in the painting as a cue that provides them with a portal for unrestrained mental roaming. Furthermore, as all of them write in verse, the poetic convention dictates its own game rules and amounts to another generic overlay, which requires exegesis on its own. Lastly, the Yuan colophon writers have no obligation to explain to *us* about what the common stock of knowledge they shared among themselves in their culture. They are secret-sharers rather than tippers. The “Pine Flower Daoist,” the first colophon writer, ends his poem with a note of inscrutability: “Who would know this tiny mental microcosm?” 寸心天地誰更知.<sup>18</sup> The colophons apparently do not provide us with a full explication of the scroll, at least not in a straightforward way. We need to look beyond the scroll for clues.

An early Yuan anthology may shed some light on the matter. Some time around 1286,<sup>19</sup> a collection of *ci*-lyrics, titled *Yuefu buti* 樂府補題 (*New Subjects for Ballads*), came into being. It includes a total of thirty-seven *ci*-lyrics by fourteen poets, divided into five groups, each on a specific object/topic: (1) ambergris perfume 龍涎香, (2) white lotus 白蓮, (3) water shield (*Brasenia*) 蓼, (4) cicada 蟬, and (5) crab 蟹.<sup>20</sup> Of the five topics, the cicada and the white lotus receive most attention. Ten poets wrote on each of the two objects.

That ten thirteenth-century poets wrote on the cicada image results in a precious treasure trove. The anthology gives us a taste of the period perception of the cicada image and the rhetorical pattern governing its use. The lyric composed to the tune “Music Fills the Sky” 齊天樂 by the early Yuan author Wang Yisun 王沂孫 is exemplary:

Breast filled with enduring pain, heartbroken in the palace,	襟餘恨宮魂斷
Year after year in the green shade of courtyard trees	年年翠陰庭樹
Abruptly sobbing on the cold branch	乍咽涼柯
Moving again, hidden by leaves	還移暗葉
Once more laying grievous plaint of parting sorrow.	重把離愁深訴
Rain passes by the west window.	西窗過雨
Surprise that jasper pendants dart through the air,	怪瑤珮流空
That the jade cither's strings are tuned.	玉箏調柱
In the mirror dimly a ravaged face	鏡暗妝殘
Lovely hair like this still, for whom?	為誰嬌鬢尚如許

The Bronze Immortal's tears of lead seem to wash clean,	銅仙鉛淚似洗
Sighing that the lifted bowl is taken far away —	嘆移盤去遠
Hard to collect the falling dew.	難貯零露
Weary wings surprised by autumn,	病翼驚秋
The shrunken shape, world-worn,	枯形閱世
Will see the sun set how many times?	消得斜陽幾度
The last cries grow more bitter.	餘音更苦
Why, in the pure heights it kept alone,	甚獨抱清高
It is all at once cold and racked?	頓成淒楚
Vain to imagine the warm wind	謾想熏風
In a thousand myriad willow threads.	柳絲千萬縷

The lyric turns on three key historical allusions. The first concerns the Queen of Qi who, having been spurned by the King, died of anger. She subsequently turned into a cicada and flew up into a courtyard tree and cried mournfully. The lyric thus begins with this elegiac cicada sobbing in the green shade of courtyard trees. The cicada as an incarnation of the heartbroken queen thus smoothly introduces the theme of a female persona. At this point, a second allusion aptly reinforces the correlation between the cicada and a sorrowful woman. A palace lady in the harem of the emperor Wen of Wei is said to have fashioned “cicada hair-puffs, which were delicate as cicada wings.” This facilitates the transition from the sobbing cicada to the young woman in the boudoir with her lovely hair done in vain.

That the cicada allegedly sustains itself on pure dew gives rise to the third allusion. The Han palace allegedly possessed a bronze statue of an immortal holding a dew-gathering plate. In a celebrated Tang poem by Li He 李賀 (790–816), the bronze statue is said to have shed “tears of lead” when it was moved from the Han capital to the Wei palace in Luoyang.<sup>21</sup> This allusion constitutes the poetic situation in Wang Yisun’s lyric. It was also on the mind of Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) when he inscribed on a fan painting featuring a cicada on a willow tree:

The golden plate gathers the dew of nine autumns.  
To the jade tree is [tethered] one thread of wind.<sup>22</sup>

金盤九秋露  
玉樹一絲風

The allusion in Wang’s *ci*-lyric cues for a connected thought. Deprived of dew, the cicada can hardly survive for long. Nevertheless, it is perched on a lonely height, giving out the last bitter cry, while in vain it consoles itself with the thought of “the warm wind / In a thousand myriad willow threads.” The phrase “warm wind” 薰風 recalls the ancient sage ruler Shun who allegedly wrote the lines: “The warmth of the south wind / Can dissolve my people’s cares.”<sup>23</sup> These allusions, especially the removal of the bronze statue from the Han palace, effectively drive home the pathos about the dynastic fall, a historical scenario all too pressing to the Song loyalists of the early Yuan.

The cicada image is not alone in serving this rhetorical purpose. Practically all the lyric songs in the anthology on the other objects/topics work to similar effects. The white lotus attracted responses. The image is associated with Yang Guifei (713–756), consort of Emperor Xuanzong (685–762) of Tang. It is striking that the removal of the bronze statue from the Han palace is here readily displaced into the poetic scenario of the Tang consort.

The topicality of the five objects/topics and their bearing on the early Yuan situation is palpable. Starting in the eighteenth century, critics began to make connections between the lyrics in the *New Subjects for Ballads* and the historical events of the early Yuan.

A set of momentous historical events had extensive impact on the public perception. In 1276, the Southern Song capital Hangzhou fell to the Mongol army. The Mongols captured the six-year-old Song ruler, Emperor Gong (Zhao Xian, r. 1275–1276), and took him to the Yuan capital Dadu (Beijing), together with his mother (Empress Quan) and grandmother (Empress Dowager Xie). Zhao Shi (1268–1287; r. 1276–1278), Zhao Xian’s eight-year-old half-brother, fled to Fujian where he was installed as Emperor Duanzong. He died of a sickness caused by shipwreck and fright. He was succeeded by Zhao Bing (1271–1279; r. 1278–1279), his seven-year-old half-brother on the Gangzhou Island on the South Sea. The brutal battle on Yashan



between the Yuan and the Song navies ended with the latter's defeat. Prime Minister Lu Xiufu jumped into the sea, carrying the eight-year-old emperor with him. As the sad news reached Consort Dowager Yang 楊太妃, she also threw herself into the sea. The remaining Song army was engulfed by a storm and perished. The historical Yashan battle left more than 100,000 dead bodies adrift on the sea.

The humiliation dealt to the Song continued. In 1277, Yuan Shizu appointed three monks as the chief abbots of Jiangnan 江南总摄 in charge of Buddhist affairs in south China.<sup>24</sup> Among them was a Central Asian (Xixia) monk named Yanglian Zhenjia 杨琏真伽.<sup>25</sup> Starting from 1278, Yanglian Zhenjia headed the looting of the Song imperial tombs in Kuaiji (Shaoxing), including those of the Song emperors, empresses, and ministers, totaling 101 in all.<sup>26</sup> The tomb robbery exposed the bodies of the Song emperors and empresses, some of them still intact. The vandals mutilated the dead bodies. "Lizong's [1205–1264] corpse was discovered to be unchanged, with a rare pearl in the mouth. The vandals hung the corpse upside down for three days from a tree to let the mercury, with which it had been embalmed, drip out and the head separated from the torso."<sup>27</sup> After the looting, the bodily remains of the Song emperors and empresses were scattered around the burial grounds. Chagrined by the sorry sight, a group of Song loyal subjects and local gentry, known as the Six Courageous Men, including Tang Jue 唐珣, Lin Deyang 林德旸, Wang Yingsun 王英孫, Zheng Puweng 郑朴翁, Xie Ao 谢翱, and Luo Xian 罗銑, managed to find ways of re-collecting the bones and had them properly reburied in front of the Tianzhang Monastery 天章寺 at Mt. Yue 越山, southwest of Shanyin. Coincidentally, the spot happened to be the site of the proverbial Orchid Pavilion where a fourth-century, elegant gathering of nobility led to Wang Xizhi's famous calligraphy. The Song loyalists marked the reburial site with evergreen trees transplanted from the Changchao Hall 长朝殿 of the former Southern Song imperial palace. They made offerings in subsequent years on the occasion of the Cold Food Day.<sup>28</sup> The desecration of the Song imperial tombs and bodies caused profound grief and bitterness among the Song loyal subjects in the Yuan.

Some of these historical circumstances may lurk behind the elegiac lyrics in the *New Subjects for Ballads*. The songs composed on the topic of "Ambergris Incense," for instance, evoke the seascape that recalls the historical battle at Yashan.<sup>29</sup> The "white lotus" that inspired ten songs in the collection is unmistakably linked to the Tang consort Yang Guifei and her tragic death, which may also trigger the thoughts of Empress Dowager Yang of the Southern Song, Emperor Duanzong's (1268–1278; r. 1276–78) mother, who plunged herself into the sea upon hearing the news of the last Song emperor's death at sea.<sup>30</sup> The well-known Tang poetic lines about the transcendent hills 仙山 in the sea lend further force to this association, thereby making Wang Yisun's lines pointedly suggestive:

Gazing at the seascape, I constantly dream  
of the white-foamed waves, thousand acres.  
望海山依約，時時夢想，素波千頃。

Or:

The expansive water, forlorn and chilly.  
The isles hazy, but how about the broken hearts?  
太液荒寒，海山依約，斷魂何許？”<sup>31</sup>

To later critics, the shadow of Yanglian Zhenjia's tomb-looting atrocity overlays the lyrics in the *New Subjects for Ballads*.<sup>32</sup> Awareness of a village gaffer's discovery of a switch of hair, six feet long and still attached to a hairpin, from the tomb of the Empress Meng, makes the reading of the cicada-themed songs all the more poignant.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Tang Jue, who led the reburial of the desecrated bodies, was among the authors anthologized in the *New Subjects for Ballads*.<sup>34</sup>

While the *New Subjects for Ballads* may potentially allow us to delve into the recess of the mind of the early Yuan viewers, it opens up a can of worms in its own way. The rise and fall of the critical reception of the *New Subjects* exemplifies the problems. The sensitive interpretation of the lyrical lines as veiled allusions to the tomb desecration and other historical events has done much to return the seemingly emotionally self-indulgent and intricately aesthetic *ci*-lyrics back to the harsh bedrock of historical reality of the somber years of early Yuan. However, the exegetic impulse among the Qing scholars to ascertain specific historical events and personage as the primary, if not the sole, references of poetic images has met growing skepticism and seen a diminished following among modern revisionist scholars.<sup>37</sup> Taking this referential specification to task, the modern detractors of this “referential school” may have a point, but only to a certain extent. Their proposed remedy or counterargument takes two directions. One is to broaden the scope of possible references. The other is to remain in firm denial by cutting the lyrics' ties to historical circumstances and disavowing any historical reference whatsoever embedded in these poetic lines beyond some lamentation of the poets' own lot.

Here is the crux of the matter. When poets and painters respond in a poetic manner to distressing and disturbing traumatic events and circumstances, they neither report, document, nor narrate. They simply emote. There is an apparent difference between documenting and emoting. The positivist-minded scholars looking for documentary evidence are bound to come up short in the emotive language.

Furthermore, precisely because the events are hideous and traumatic, and the circumstances unwieldy and unruly, the poets/painters' reaction is typically one of

sublimation. That is, they master the situation through transcendence and poetic streamlining, aestheticizing the unruly by creating a different order of experience so that the new domain could be lived and absorbed, the unruly feeling purged and expunged.

This new order of experience therefore bears only tenuous relationship with the prior real event and circumstances. To that extent, both the referentially driven critics and their detractors err on the same positivistic ground. Critics like Li E (1692–1752) and Xia Chengtao (1900–?) may have indeed gone overboard in their studious — at times overzealous — effort to match poetic phrases with specific historical events/persons. Faulting them for lack of tangible evidence, their detractors make the same mistake in a positivistic assumption, i.e., it is as if one could “prove” a song’s reference to historical events; the failure to prove is assumed to stem from lack of bedrock of hard evidence. They thus bark up the wrong tree. With the poetic genre as such, the evidence will never be forthcoming. We can never *prove* if the *New Ballads* and our cicada painting are indeed symbolic ways of “responding” to the early Yuan historical events. They may and may not. We can only sense *how* they may, if, indeed they do respond.

The primary significance of the *New Subjects for Ballads* for our purpose here rests in its demonstrated working of the poetic thought process in response to the cicada topos. The cicada painting demands a poetic response, indicated by the five colophons following the picture in the *World of Vitality*. This is to say that painting by this time had become so poetically charged that it demands a literary or poetic response in a more generic way. The literary response comes down not just to a readiness to link a pictorial image to a stock of familiar lines. It means a mental aptitude to get into generic grooves and see things generically. In other words, we should begin to speak of the generic mode of *response* to paintings, not just genres of paintings.

Once the viewer gets into the poetic mode, there are certain expected sets or patterns of thought. As poetry works through loose associations and tropes, we accordingly expect them to be operative in the beholder’s mind and identify the pattern. Doing so may often take us by surprise. So we now should speak not just of the style of painting, but the style of perceptual response, or even style of thought. But this is not the end of inquiry.

Up to this point, the notion of painting as a cuing device to solicit poetic thoughts from its beholder is premised upon iconography. In other words, certain kinds of images — a cicada, for instance — automatically conjure up a set of literary associations and conventions in the mind of the beholder, regardless of the formal property of the painting. There is a justification to reinforce this point as a way of undermining the blind faith in the untutored eye. Uninformed looking does not necessarily yield a proper historical understanding. The point here is rather to revive



an oft-forgotten and dormant commonplace, i.e., it takes both intuitive perception and intellectual knowledge to recover the entirety of a meaningful experience of an artwork.<sup>38</sup> To stress the embedded literary knowledge is not to neglect the visual force of the *pictorial execution*.

The *World of Vitality* highlights how the pathos is *pictured*. Recovering poetic associations attending the viewing of the painting, though necessary, always runs the danger of literary reductionism at the expense of pictorial property. The *World of Vitality* is a notable exercise in polychrome, descriptive realism. The liberal use of a variety of colors in tandem with refined drawing produce a polychrome mosaic of meticulous care. The painting displays a punctilious attention to the modeling of well-wrought forms and refined details. This results in a remarkable showcase of pictorial verisimilitude. As such, the painting can be seen as a dutiful continuation of the polychrome plants-and-insects tradition codified and perfected in the Song.

This manifested stylistic alignment with the Song, innocuous as it may appear, has considerable ramifications in the context of Yuan critical reception. Yuan viewers readily identify the liberal use of heavy color and exquisite workmanship as a stable feature of “recentism” 近体, i.e., the Southern Song pictorial style. From our viewpoint, these traits are by no means limited to the Southern Song. To the Yuan critical palate—as articulated by Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), one of the powerful arbiters of taste—however, these decidedly recall the Southern Song style. Whatever complex psychological subtext underlying the Yuan-period reaction against the Southern Song models, the anti-recentist sentiment, as repeatedly voiced by Zhao Mengfu, is emphatic and total.

This is not just a matter of aesthetic taste. The genre of the birds-and-flower painting had traditionally been entrenched in ornate color schemes and descriptive modeling of forms. It has the overtone of material opulence and complacent leisure. The measured workmanship without the traces of the painter’s brush-wielding gestural execution results in a calm and controlled veneer that hardly divulges any emotional states, real or simulated, of the artist. It is for this reason that Yuan beholders ascertained “an absence of any hint of rankling and grievance” in Qian Xuan’s (ca. 1235–ca. 1307) works.<sup>39</sup>

This strikes modern viewers as both mildly ironic and richly suggestive. The impact of the fall of the Song on Qian Xuan is apparent. His refusal to serve the Yuan government and his burning of his own writing on real-world matters all indicate his strong reaction toward the Mongolian rule and the changed world around him. His tranquil landscape and birds-and-flowers (including the plants-and-insects) paintings suggest a decided eremitic stance in seeking the solace of a utopian alternative world. This means that the “absence of any hint of rankling and grievance”

the Yuan viewer ascertained in Qian's works is deceptive. This also means that the ornate polychrome birds-and-flower painting (which includes the plants-and-insects subjects), epitomized by Qian Xuan and characterized by Zhao Mengfu as "recentism,"<sup>40</sup> decidedly struck Yuan beholders as lacking in emotional rhetoric.

This points to the tension in the *World of Vitality*. Its suggestive depiction of a mantis preying on a cicada decidedly solicits a response couched in the literary rhetoric of pathos, one that was made heavier in the early Yuan, as manifested in the *New Subjects for Ballads*. The force of the "rankling and grievance" lodged in the cicada trope, however, is expectedly compromised by — if not lost in — the ornate and well-wrought pictorial workmanship with its overtones of complacency, indulgence in material opulence, and general well-being.

The tension is solved in the *Eight Insect Themes* by Jianbaizi 堅白子 (fig. 8), dated 1330. Jianbaizi is probably the sobriquet of Zhou Boqi 周伯琦 (1298–1369), a native of Raozhou 饒州 (i.e., modern Boyang of Jiangxi), who grew up in the capital city. A graduate of the Senior College of the National University, Zhou Boqi served in his early career as the Assistant Magistrate of Nanhai and then the Senior Compiler at the Imperial Academy. He was known for his elegant and mild manner and excellence in calligraphy.<sup>41</sup>

In stark contrast to the *World of Vitality* (fig. 1), the *Eight Insect Themes* signals an alternative pictorial conception. Instead of color on silk, it is ink on paper. The Xuancheng paper, which had gained popularity in the Yuan, has the notable property of easy absorption and retaining of ink. It allows for subtle gradation of ink brushwork, thereby accommodating the tonal expressiveness of ink in a way that is untenable in the silk medium.

The visual force derived from the ink play is notable. The cicada, executed in a deliberate manner with full attention to the modeling of its body, clings to what appears to be a willow branch. The cicada's last perch, however, is soon eroded: the willow branch tapers into a serrated rough end, pictorially treated as a few cursorily disposed coarse brush strokes of dry ink. This results in a visual drama built on a tension between the carefully delineated form of the cicada, rendered with full loving care, and the ruthless sweep of the dry-ink dash that abruptly brings the willow branch — the cicada's last remnant of surviving perch — to an unexpected end. The pictorial disposition registers a symbolic act of violence upon the vulnerable cicada. The withering force of the autumnal or wintry season inclement to the survival of the cicada is here translated into its formal correlate: the coarsened traces of the cursory dry-ink brush strokes. The calculated use of the ink tonality solicits a synesthetic response. The coarsened spread of dry ink — with both visual and tactile qualities — conjures up a mood of the late autumn chill and barrenness, thereby fittingly enacting the scenario of the cicada struggling in the encroaching



8

8  
Jianbaizi (1298–1369), *Eight Insect Themes*, handscroll, ink on paper, 22.8 x 266.2 cm. Colophon by Jianbaizi, 1330. Courtesy of Palace Museum, Beijing.

wintry chill and desolation. In contrast, the *World of Vitality* aims to capture the withering effect of “dryness” 枯 through what its silk medium could accommodate. The shriveled and withered tips of the leaves, which are carefully depicted, show the wintry season taking its toll (fig. 3).

The significance of the *Eight Insect Themes* is not to be discounted. If the cicada image visualizes pathos, as it has traditionally done so, with the present ink painting, the rhetorical force is no longer parasitic on the literary association. Awareness of the literary association indeed reinforces the pathos. It is, however, no longer the sole source of the effect. The visual force derived from the calculated ink play brings out the pathos.

It is apparent that the *Eight Insect Themes* positions itself as a powerful alternative to the *World of Vitality*. We have a stark opposition: ink-on-paper versus color-on-silk, cursory execution versus the deliberate plodding, expressive hand versus neutralizing concealment of gestural acts, and accordingly the assertive authorial presence versus the self-effacing disappearing act.

Jianbaizi, the painter of the *Eight Insect Themes*, supplies us with terms to access his pictorial quality. In his colophon on the painting, he considers this type of ink painting as rising above the “category of the cinnabar-and-blue (color) and brush and ink” 丹青筆墨之科. It is not entirely clear whether he means the cinnabar-and-blue (color) kind or brush and ink (ink work), or considers these two as separate categories of painting — most likely he is not drawing the distinction here between the two phrases. However, he is beginning to set *his* kind of painting against the common stock of pictures, which is to say, he is setting ink painting apart from the polychrome painting. While cinnabar-and-blue had traditionally denoted painting in general, it is apparent that in his time, more refined schemes of categories were called for to differentiate two modes of painting: the polychrome, fittingly signified by the traditional phrase cinnabar-and-blue and the brush-and-ink modes.

Each category had acquired different period associations in the early decades of the fourteenth century. The polychrome cinnabar-and-blue is a staple feature of



recentism. Its antithesis is the “archaism,” an aspiration shared by the Yuan literati with Zhao Mengfu leading the way. The inception of the *Eight Insect Themes* epitomizes this taste. Jianbaizi, the painter of the scroll, presents it as his alleged effort to preserve by way of copying or duplicating — he calls it “collecting” — a notable artifact, a scroll allegedly executed by a certain eleventh-century painter known as Candidate Yong, which bears the inscription of Su Shi (1036–1101), the paragon of literati taste. Having heard about the proverbial scroll, Jianbaizi finally had the chance to see it firsthand, courtesy of Zhao Mengfu, one of the most prominent scholar-officials of his time. Jianbaizi’s impression of the work was one of “archaic flavor that does not stoop to the category of the cinnabar-and-blue and ink and brush.” He therefore made a copy in an attempt to capture the “remnant of its flavor.”<sup>42</sup>

Zhao Mengfu was instrumental in setting up the opposition between “archaism” 古意 versus “recentism” 近体.<sup>43</sup> The opposition should not be reduced to the familiar crude formula of Yuan “expressionism” versus Song “realism,” or “academism” versus “literati” style, which has long dominated and framed our discussion of the Song-and-Yuan painting. In the scheme defined by Zhao Mengfu and his like-minded, early Yuan literati, recentism largely encompasses the two extreme ends of the Southern Song spectrum, i.e., the well-wrought polychrome realism on the one hand and the unfettered, wildly cursory ink play on the other. Just as they were averse to the ornate polychrome workmanship associated with recentism, Yuan critics likewise resolutely dismissed the kind of wildly gesticulated sketchy type of recentist 近世 painting, epitomized by Muqi’s (active mid-13th c.) abbreviated “ink play.” It was considered “coarse and vulgar, devoid of archaic method” 粗惡無古法.<sup>44</sup>

The archaism admired by the Yuan literati is the quality they identified in — or rather, projected into — paintings of Northern Song and earlier periods. It strikes a balance between the excessively ornate, deadpan workmanship and the undisciplined, freehand, sketchy ink play.

The *Eight Insect Theme* by Jianbaizi exemplifies this moderate stance. Self-advertised as an exercise in “playful contemplation” 遊戲三昧, it decidedly displays traits of a sketchy ink play. The serrated rough ends of the willow branch register a cursory execution in its disregard of verisimilitude effect. In doing so, it sets itself apart from the plodding kind of recentism. The force of the cursory ink play is however counterbalanced by the meticulous care with which the two sides of the willow leaves are contrasted — the dry-ink hatching on one side and the rhythmically repeated brush strokes on the other — and the detailed draftsmanship that coaxes the cicada into being. Much as the sensitive modeling of the cicada recalls the meticulous care of the well-wrought recentism, the painter pointedly downplays such an association by eschewing the recentist color application; in its stead, he empowers

the monochrome ink. In other words, the painter uses the well-wrought recentist polychrome scheme without applying color and opts for a cursory ink play with caution. The result is a self-discipline without appearing plodding, a measured moderate release of freehand energy without getting out of hand (fig. 8).

The claim of archaism here is merely a self-legitimizing move. The driving force behind this calculated effect is the striving after a touch of elegance. What accounts for this new sensibility may have to do with the shift in cultural values. By the 1320s and 1330s, when both the *World of Vitality* (1321) and the *Eight Insect Themes* (1330) were produced, the cultural climate had taken on a different turn. The strong and agitated anti-Mongol sentiment that characterizes the expressive register of the early Yuan Chinese writing and painting had subdued. In 1315, the Yuan government restored the examination recruitment system that it had discontinued for years. This signaled an end of the tunnel after the dark period of disorientation for the aspiring scholars who had long been accustomed to following the default career path from the mastery of classical learning to upward mobility along social ladders. The restoration of the examination recruitment system therefore served as a good bait for scholars to refocus their attention and devote their mental and emotional energy to this career aspiration. Its attendant effect was to lessen the intensity of their mourning for the lost familiar world associated with the old days of the Song dynasty. As Jie Xisi (1274–1344) observed: “Having let up their mourning, the scholars are now inclined toward peacefulness — all induced by the [restored] examination recruitment.”<sup>45</sup> The restoration of the examination recruitment system apparently had a calming and stabilizing effect. With the classical learning becoming relevant again, the mood swung back to the “cultivation of elegance” 崇雅.<sup>46</sup> This meant a taste for subdued and measured, “peaceful” 平和 manner of expression and horror of excessive emoting.<sup>47</sup>

In this light, it comes as no surprise that the advocacy for archaism comes down to rejecting excesses and extremes: both overwrought craftsmanship and unfettered freehand are to be frowned upon as they both depart from the peaceful moderation of the cultivated elegance.

It is relatively easy to sort out these values and concepts schematically in the discursive domain. When it comes to pictorial qualities, however, such a clear-cut schema is hard to sustain. Confusion is to be expected. The *World of Vitality* could indeed be seen as symptomatic of the continuation of the ornate recentism despised by Zhao Mengfu and his followers. However, its default overtone of leisure and complacency would readily solicit a perception of elegance and peaceful moderation. This impression is particularly justified when we think of the tension between its representational content and formal mode. To the extent that the cicada image cues for pathos, the painting solicits an agitated emotional rhetoric.

The well-wrought formal texture, however, resulting from a measured execution reveals — or creates an impression or effect of — a moderate and peaceful disposition whose tenet is at odds with the pathos.

This tension can be construed in a number of ways. We may see it as gradual internalization, sublimation, or working through the trauma experienced by the Chinese in the early Yuan. Or we may consider it as the inertia of the earlier rhetoric carrying over into a changed situation and time when such a rhetoric is gradually losing its circumstantial ground. Or we may construe the *Eight Insect Theme* as a different way of picturing this psychological process through a release-control mechanism. The list of possibilities can pile up. What is certain is that we see at this stage the values of moderation and elegance taking hold and translating into a distinct pictorial texture.

From the above, it becomes clear that the significance of the Yuan paintings of cicadas pertains not just to the genres of plants and insects or birds and flowers. They expose the vexed problems of interpreting Yuan paintings. What I have shown is twofold. First, I demonstrated that certain subjects of paintings, such as the cicada, served as a rhetoric trigger to solicit emotional responses — such as pathos — structured through set literary conventions. To mine these conventions is not so much to identify the textual sources of images as it is a matter of recovering the *style of response* commonly shared by both the painter and his contemporary beholder. To this extent, it is just as important to reconstruct the cognitive style in relation to the pictorial style in order to recover the historical experience attending the Yuan painting. Second, I tried to establish that the changing pictorial conceptions in Yuan generated a different way of conveying pathos. The symbolic reorientation and charging of values in pictorial properties (e.g., well-wrought polychrome realism, unfettered and restrained modes of monochrome ink play, etc.) created a new hierarchy of expressive registers and values. This requires a sensitivity on our part to attend to these formal properties as a basis of cultural-historical interpretation.

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## NOTES

- 1 The present study is built on Roderick Whitfield's foundational study of the scroll, *Fascination of Nature: Plants and Insects in Chinese Painting and Ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty* (1279–1368) (Seoul: Yekyong Publications, 1993). This essay neither disputes nor revises any of Whitfield's discoveries and claims; instead, it addresses a different set of issues raised by the scroll.
- 2 Chen Bangyan 陳邦彥 (1678–1752) compilation, *Yuding lidai tihuashi* 禦定歷代題畫詩, *Zhongguo shuhua quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2000), vol. 9, 756a; hereafter cited as ZSQ.
- 3 Jiang Tingxi's painting is an album leaf in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. See *Caochonghua tezhan tulu* 草蟲畫特展圖錄 (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1986), no. 32.
- 4 Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi jin zhu jinyi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 522–23.
- 5 The Emperor Xiaowu of Liu Song is said to have given He Ji 何戡 (446–482) a fan bearing a *Picture of Cicada and Bird* 蟬雀扇, painted by Gu Jingxiu 顧景秀. Dong You 董道 (early 12th c.), *Guanchuan huaba* 廣川畫跋, ZSQ, vol. 1, 841a. The painting is also registered in the Tang catalogues. *Lidai minghua ji*, ZSQ, vol. 1, 143a. Pei Xiaoyuan 裴孝源, *Zhenguangongsihuashi* 貞觀公私畫史, ZSQ, vol. 1, 171a. The imperial collection of the Sui Dynasty had a *Picture of Cicada and Bird* 蟬雀圖 attributed to Lu Tanwei. Pei Xiaoyuan, *Zhenguangongsihuashi*, ZSQ, vol. 1, 170b. Cui Bo 崔白 also painted a painting of this title. *Guanchuan huaba* 廣川畫跋, ZSQ, vol. 1, 841a.
- 6 Jiang Zhong, "Poem Composed on the Occasion of Attending the Dinner at the Jade Spring" 侍宴瑤泉殿詩, in *Xian-Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, ed. Lu Qinli (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), *juan* 8, 2589. Elsewhere, in another poem, Jiang Zhong has a similar couplet: "The cicada in cold is loud in its wail from the dense forest; the sparrow under shady eaves is sad in its chirp" 樹密寒蟬響, 簷暗雀聲愁. Lu Qinli, *Xian-Qin Han Wei*, 2586.
- 7 Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303), "Hanchan fuxu" 寒蟬賦序 (Preface to the rhapsody on the cold cicada) *juan* 100, 2034b.
- 8 蟬居高食潔, 目在腋下. According to the *Han guan yi* 漢官儀, the headgear of a Palace Attendant 侍中, emperor's advisor, is decorated with the image of a cicada, Ying Shao 應劭, *Han guan yi*, in *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), *juan* 34, 665b; hereafter cited as QSSQHSLW. For examples of the gold pendants 金璫 (*jindang*) featuring the cicada motif from a Jin tomb, see 2003 *Zhongguo zhongyao kaogu faxian* (Beijing: Wenwu, 2004), 112, and 1998 *Zhongguo zhongyao kaogu faxian* (Beijing: Wenwu, 2000), 76.
- 9 清虛識變也。在位者有文而不自耀。有武而不示人。清虛自牧。識時而動也。Cui Bao 崔豹 (fl. 290–306), *Gujin zhu* 古今註, in *Han Wei Liuchaobijixiaoshuodaguan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1999), 235.
- 10 Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, 28.
- 11 *Yuanshi* 元史 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1977), 189. 4316.
- 12 Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, 30–31.
- 13 For a brief biographic account of Chen, see *Yuanshi xuan* 元詩選, ed. Gu Sili 顧嗣立 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 302. For a thorough roundup of the primary sources on Chen Shen, see Hu Shihou 胡世厚, "Bai Pujiaoyou kao bu" 白朴交遊考補, *Shanxi daxue xuebao* 25, no. 6 (December 2002): 22–24.
- 14 See Gu Sili, *Yuanshi xuan*, 308.
- 15 Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, 33. For information on Feng Mian, see Chen Gaohua, *Chen Gaohua wenji* (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2005): 182.
- 16 As Whitfield notes, Chen's poem was "written on a different sheet of yellowish-brown paper and therefore likely to be a later addition to the mounting of the scroll than

- the first four inscriptions." Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, 33.
- 17 Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, 33.
- 18 My translation of the final line differs from that of Whitfield's, who renders it as: "What then can a single mind know of heaven and earth?" Whitfield, *Fascination of Nature*, 29.
- 19 Xiao Peng dates the compilation of the *New Subjects for Ballads* to ca. 1286. Wu Xionghe dates to the years between 1291–1293. See Xiao Peng 蕭鵬, "Yuefu buti jituo fayi" 樂府補題寄托發疑, *Wenxue yichan* 1 (1985): 66–71; reference is to 68.
- 20 Ding Fang 丁放, "Yuefubutizhuzhi kaobian" 樂府補題主旨考辨, *Journal of Anhui Normal University* 29, no. 4 (2001): 531–38; Huang Zhaoxian 黃兆顯, *Yuefubuti yanjiu* 樂府補題研究及箋注 (Hong Kong: Xuewen chubanshe, 1975), 11; Florence Chia-ying Yeh, "On Wang I-sun and His Songs Celebrating Objects," in James R. Hightower and Florence Chia-ying Yeh, *Studies in Chinese Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 389; and Kang-I-Sun Chang, "Symbolic and Allegorical Meanings in the Yueh-fu pu-t'i Poem Series," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 2 (1986): 353–85.
- 21 Cui Bao, *Gujin zhu*, 249; Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 399.
- 22 Cui Bao, *Gujin zhu*, 247; Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 400.
- 23 Li He 李賀, "Jintong xianren ci Han ge" 金銅仙人辭漢歌 in *Quan Tang shi*, juan 391, no. 1.
- 24 Yu Ji 虞集, "Huashan liuchan" 畫扇柳蟬, in *Yuding lidai tihuashi*, in *ZSQ*, juan 9/756.
- 25 南風之薰兮可以解吾民之慍兮. Kongzi jia yu 孔子家語, annot. Wang Su 王肅 (Taipei: Shijieshuju, 1978), 8.80; Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 402.
- 26 Gu Sili, *Yuanshi xuan*, 10.174; Xie Jisheng and Gao Hefu, "杭州飞来峰藏传石刻造像的风格渊源与历史文化价值," *Tibetan Studies* 2 (2003), 41.
- 27 Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 397.
- 28 Huang Zhaoxian, *Yuefubuti yanjiu*, 96.
- 29 Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 397.
- 30 Huang Zhaoxian, *Yuefubuti yanjiu*, 3, 96–97, 100–01.
- 31 See Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 392–96; Xiao Peng, "Yuefubuti jituo fayi," 66–71.
- 32 *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 243.8862. Both Wang Dajun and Chi Baodong suggest the possible connection. See Wang Dajun 王大鈞, "Yuefubuti xinkao" 樂府補題新攷, *Wenxue yichan* 5 (1989); Chi Baodong 遲寶東, "Yuefubuti xinlun" 樂府補題新論, *Tianjin shifan daxue xuebao* 162, no. 3 (2002): 51–56.
- 33 Chi Baodong, "Yuefubuti xinlun," 53. Xia Chengtao specifies the lines by Wang Yisun, Lü Tonglao, and Li Juren in connection with the Yashan battle. Xia Chengtao 夏承燾, *Tang Song ciren nianpu* 唐宋詞人年譜 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1979): 382.
- 34 The critical response along this line started with Li E 厲鶚 (1692–1752) and culminates with Xia Chengtao (1900–?), "Yuefubuti kao" 樂府補題考, in *Tang Song ciren nianpu*, 376–82.
- 35 Yeh, "On Wang I-sun," 397.
- 36 Tang was an orphan, but through Confucian learning, he became known as a teacher of filial piety. His leadership role in the reburial became a household tale in the Wu-Yu region and touched many a heart. Huang Zhaoxian, *Yuefubuti yanjiu*, 101.
- 37 Chen Tingzhuo 陳廷焯 (1853–1892) was the first to specify the historical references of a number of poetic lines and phrases in the *New Subjects*. See Chen Tingzhuo, *Baiyuzhai chihua* 白雨齋詞話 juan 2; Ding Fang, "Yuefubutizhuzhi kaobian," 532.
- 38 Rudolf Arnheim, *The Split and the Structure* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 69.
- 39 Zhao Pang 趙汭 (1319–1369), *Dongshan cungao* 東山存稿. In *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983), vol. 1221; hereafter cited as YWSQ.
- 40 Commenting on Qian Xuan's *Eight Flowers*, Zhao noted that "even though its style is akin to the Recentist mode, its charming color is rare ... the scroll is to be prized" 雖風格似近體。而傳色姿媚殊不可得 ... 則此卷誠可珍也.
- 41 See Chen Naiqian 陳乃乾, ed., *Shiming biehao suoyin* 室名別號索引 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 66, 184; *Yuanshi*, 4296; *Yuanshi xuan*, 1857.
- 42 風致高古不墮丹青筆墨之科 ... 庶亦存其餘味.
- 43 See Xu Jianrong 徐建融, "Jinshi yu guyi" 近世與古意, in Xu Jianrong, *Yuandai shuhua zaojian yu yishu shichang* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 1999), 149–60.
- 44 Tang Hou 湯垕, *Gujin huajian* 古今畫鑑, in *ZSQ*, vol. 2, 901a. It is to be noted that Tang Hou does not dismiss "ink play" 墨戲 across the board. He only faults Muqi's unfettered mode of ink play, while touting Su Shi's attention to ink play 留心墨戲 in the vein of "sketch conceptualism without seeking verisimilitude" 寫意不求形似. See *ZSQ*, 900a.
- 45 學者復靡然去哀思而趨和平。科舉之利誘也。Jie Xisi 揭傒斯 (1274–1344), *Wen'an ji* 文安集, ed. Xilabuha 錫喇布哈, in *YWSQ*, vol. 1208, 8.1–2.
- 46 Liu Yueshen (1260–1346) wrote a preface for the anthology collected by his friend Liu Menghuai 劉孟懷, which is titled *Cultivation of Elegance* 崇雅. He also notes that "Cultivation of Elegance" is in vogue. See Liu Yueshen, "贈劉孟懷采詩文序," in Liu Yueshen, *Shenzhai ji* 申齋集, *YWSQ*, vol. 1204, 11–12.
- 47 According to Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348), the "cultivation of elegance" entails "peaceful diction and suggestive resonance in meaning" 辭平和而意深長. Yu Ji, "Li Zhongyuan shigao xu" 李仲淵詩稿序, in Yu Ji, *Daoyuan xuegu lu* 道園學古錄, *YWSQ*, vol. 1207, 6.3.

## DE-CENTERING YUAN PAINTING

DURING THE TURBULENT DECADE from 1966 to 1976, Chinese art history in American academia had its own modest cultural revolution, marked by the ascendancy of Yuan 元 painting studies. The decade was bracketed by the publication of Chu-tsing Li's *Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains* and James Cahill's *Hills Beyond a River*, with the Cleveland Museum of Art's *Chinese Art Under the Mongols* exhibition and catalogue, Max Loehr's *Chinese Painting After Sung*, and Wen Fong's "Toward a Structural Analysis of Chinese Landscape Painting" appearing among other signpost publications.<sup>1</sup> This cluster of exhibitions, publications, and conferences engendered in its wake a flurry of Yuan painting dissertations and related publications for another fifteen years or so.<sup>2</sup> During this quarter century, Yuan painting studies were central to Chinese art history to a degree unapproached before or since. While important dissertations and other studies on Yuan art history continue to be written, though in smaller numbers over the most recent fifteen years, Yuan painting seems much less central to Chinese art history now than then.<sup>3</sup>

The notion of Yuan painting is, of course, not a given but rather a historiographic construction, liable to many different selections and shapings. In American art historical practice, the Yuan painting construct has tended to focus on Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) and the so-called Four Late Yuan Masters: Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354), Wu Zhen 吳鎮 (1280–1354), Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–1374), and Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308–1385) and their Jiangnan (southeastern China) literati associates, from Qian Xuan 錢選 (ca. 1235–before 1307) in the early Yuan to Fang Congyi 方從義 (ca. 1301–after 1380), Zhao Yuan 趙原 (d. after 1373), and Chen Ruyan 陳汝言 (ca. 1331–before 1371) in the late Yuan–early Ming.<sup>4</sup> Many different configurations are possible and have been operative at various times in European, American, Chinese, and Japanese art historical circles, from the most expansive considerations of Yuan pictorial media and material culture down to implied challenges to the notion of the Yuan as a distinct art historical period. The particular configuration of Yuan painting in American academia from the mid-1960s to around 1990 might be seen as the combined product of academic trends and sociology, institutional structures, and intellectual interests. The institutional dimension is fairly clear, since most academic research on Yuan painting during the decades of its centrality emerged from centers at Berkeley, Kansas, Michigan, Princeton, and Yale (in alphabetic order), which had the guidance of interested senior scholars in the history of art, history, and Chinese literature; substantial library and visual archive resources; and graduate program support; with the Cleveland Museum of Art as a key associated museum institution. Some considerable portion of research and publication activity was generated from the virtuous circle of the critical mass, density, and friction of intellectual and institutional stimulation and competition, with accompanying vectors of dissertation advising.<sup>5</sup>



Institutional and personal rivalries aside, the tide of interest in Yuan painting had complex intellectual underpinnings. Some of these extended back to long before the mid-1960s of course, including Dong Qichang's 董其昌 foregrounding of the Four Yuan Masters and Zhao Mengfu within his Northern and Southern School theory of art historical discourse. The promotion of an inscription-focused approach to understanding the theoretical, social, and personal dimensions of later Chinese painting production in essays by H. C. Chang and others was part of a methodological turn toward text-centered scholarship that was congenial to studies of Yuan scholar-amateur painting, with its rich archive of inscriptional and catalogue records.<sup>6</sup>

Along with the intrinsic visual, aesthetic, and theoretical interest of major Yuan painting monuments and their deep-seated underpinnings in Chinese art historical discourse, some part of their centrality to Chinese art history in the 1960s and beyond was due to the ways they opened up a discursive space that permitted scholars to speak of other things. During those years, Yuan painting became a focal site for discussions of the modern, the classic, the spatial, the epochal, and the revolutionary, as suggested by a few excerpts from the writings of leading scholars.

For Chu-tsing Li, Yuan painting was a synthesizing and classicizing era in painting:

The great achievement of Chao Meng-fu becomes easy for us to understand. After re-experiencing the whole development of Chinese painting from Tang 唐 to his own time, he finally created a new style of Chiang-nan 江南 landscape as a poetic, intimate, and personal expression in the guise of a return to Wang Wei's 王維 approach. Never an imitative artist, Chao's return to T'ang is thus a new synthesis, a kind of classicism similar to that of the Renaissance.<sup>7</sup>

In this view, the Yuan was a transitional era in painting—with roots in the Tang and Five Dynasties, it looked forward to the literati theory of Dong Qichang. Dong Qichang served, one might say, as the Yuan's ex post facto or anachronistic prophet and interpreter, who presaged in his own theory the modern scholarly shift from Zhao Mengfu as protagonist to the later Yuan Four Great Masters, as they came to be known.<sup>8</sup>

For Wen Fong, Yuan painting was:

Illusionism Fully Mastered ... *Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains*, dated 1296, by Chao Meng-fu ... features as its dominant compositional element a continuous receding ground plane ... Every element in



1

1  
Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, 1295, handscroll, ink and colors on paper, 28.4 x 93.2 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum Taipei.

the composition relates closely to a consistently receding ground plane; the space appears to be physical and measurable (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup>

For Max Loehr, writing in 1967, the Yuan was the start of a fundamentally new era, a necessary beginning after the endpoint of representational subtlety had been reached in the painting of the court and Chan 禪 painters of the late Southern Song:



2  
*Autumn Landscape*, album leaf, gouache on paper, 30.5 x 42 cm., in Topkapi Sarayi album H.2154, 68a. Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul.

The object no longer counts for much: another step and it will disappear altogether. This Lu-shan picture heralds the end of a long, rational, realistically oriented tradition ... concerned, in the beginning, with the depiction of things as such; ... finally with mere suggestions of their existence in infinite space. There was no further development along that line. Painting had come to what then must have seemed the final end ... Ch'ien Hsüan, *Shan-chü t'u* 山居圖, "Dwelling in the Mountains" ... reveals an almost revolutionary reorientation ... a complete renunciation of Sung achievements ... all of the [Yuan] masters ... rejected the ideals of Sung ... and they all seemed concerned with structural principles and a new linearity ... The Sung painter, using his style as a tool, tackles the problem of how to depict mountains and water; the Yuan painter, using mountains and water as his media, tackles the problem of creating a style.<sup>10</sup>

Conceived within the general discursive framework of the German-Austrian school with its art historical emphases on style periods, Yuan painting was, in Loehr's formulation, in some ways an art historical necessity following the developmental impasse of late Song painting. Sherman Lee, writing in the following year, developed the idea of Yuan painting as constituting an epochal shift, but in the language of modern artistic revolution:

The accepted standards and appearance of Chinese painting were radically altered in the fourteenth century. No historically accepted painting of importance executed after the Yuan Dynasty looks very much like any painting of a previous time. Sometime after the middle of the fourteenth century the precarious balance between tradition and innovation was destroyed, and the new literary man's style achieved dominance. ... The new direction was a

revolutionary one and the artists who led the way were as much innovators within a Chinese frame of reference as those early twentieth-century Europeans who followed the solid accomplishments of the Post-Impressionists, or the polyglots in New York during the 1940s....<sup>11</sup>

Lee echoed Loehr's account of the Yuan as a period of epochal artistic change, but added a distinctive characteristic of revolutionary modernity akin to that of the early twentieth-century West. Rather than the cyclical machinery of formal structures, and their exploration and exhaustion, the engine of revolutionary change for Lee involved social and political factors.<sup>12</sup> Lee's account was certainly shaped by the pathbreaking and richly documented sociological analysis of Yuan artists furnished by his collaborator Wai-kam Ho, and likely by the discerning and sympathetic account of Yuan scholar-amateur aesthetics—and its parallels with modern painting and music—offered in James Cahill's *Chinese Painting* of 1960.<sup>13</sup>

Cahill's 1976 survey of Yuan painting, *Hills Beyond a River*, incorporated many of these elements among its leading themes: the shift from representational to stylistic primacy, the significance of altered social and institutional circumstances for artists, and the importance of programs of archaism and formalist art theory.<sup>14</sup> The notion of revolutionary change in painting is especially prominent as a framing narrative in the book, which begins by announcing a Yuan revolution in painting whose completion is signaled in the last line of the text. That revolution was in some respects akin to modernist movements of more recent times in the West—formalist and expressionist in its emphases.<sup>15</sup>

These quotations are only extracts from studies that are richly textured with historical detail, textual and visual analysis, and insight into social trends, while deeply grounded in the local cultural and historical circumstances of Yuan-period China. Such excerpts do, however, serve to indicate that prominent among the other matters involved in discussions of Yuan painting were the major concerns of post-World War II Renaissance to modern art historiography and criticism: perspective and pictorial space; Renaissance and renaissances; and revolutionary, formalist, and expressionist aesthetics.<sup>16</sup> These concerns might in other contexts beg the deep art historical questions of whether Yuan painting had a meaningful classicism and conquered pictorial space before the Italian Renaissance, was revolutionary before the Romantics, or was formally and expressionistically modern before Cézanne and Pollock. Viewed primarily as art historical discourse, however, we might focus on the salient concerns in these formative discussions of Yuan painting: the development of an art historical consciousness, "classical" or otherwise, within it; its command of pictorial space; its status as a distinctive artistic epoch,





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Wu Zhen (1280–1354), *Zhong shan tu* (*The Central Mountain*), 1336, handscroll, ink on paper, 26.4 x 90.7 cm, mounted in the *Collective Handscroll of Yuan Dynasty Artists* (*Yuanren jijin*). Collection of the National Palace Museum Taipei.

not just a political-historical one, marked by a revolutionary shift—centered in the painting of the literary men or scholar-amateurs—from world-representation to style creation; and an emphasis on formal structure and personal expression. Yuan painting, formulated in these ways, was thus not only becoming central to Chinese art studies but was moving closer to the central concerns of art history at large as an intellectual enterprise and as an academic discipline, dominated then as now by studies of Renaissance (or early modern) to modern art.<sup>17</sup>

There were corollaries to these emphases that involved more than art historical matters. Chu-tsing Li's presentation of Yuan scholar-amateur painters, for example, foregrounded their role as preservers and transmitters of a high, generally Confucian culture within the unsympathetic or actively hostile environment of barbarian Mongol rule.<sup>18</sup> Whether consciously intended or not, it is not difficult to see this as an analogue for the then contemporary situation of scholars and artists in China, victims of anti-Rightist and anti-intellectual campaigns by the Communist regime, or to find perhaps an even more specific parallel to the displaced Nationalists on Taiwan as self-styled rescuers and preservers of high Confucian culture against the Communists.<sup>19</sup> In either case, writing about Yuan scholar-amateur painting was a way of talking about contemporary cultural politics.

These art historical or cultural-political lenses might be viewed as distorting or flawed by ideological interest in that some putatively authentic Yuan period is used as a pretext for conveying contemporary purposes or arguments, rather than understood and valued for its intrinsic qualities. Even if not overtly political, some of these art historical accounts of the Yuan might seem anachronistic or even vaguely Orientalist, to the degree that the Yuan is presented as of interest only where and to the extent that it foreshadows or echoes characteristics of the modern West. One might, of course, equally find in such accounts an implication that Yuan China was in advance of the modern West in those features, but in either case the focal concerns are aspects foregrounded in modern Western art discourse. Whatever the motivations for these narratives, they were not particularly hidden or surreptitious, and indeed they were more often than not emphatically stated. Primarily these analogies between Yuan painting and early modern/modern art were utilized as heuristic tools of engagement, or ways of making the Yuan meaningful to contemporary readers' interests. They acknowledged overtly the ways that historical constructions are shaped by dynamic exchanges between contemporary concerns and historical materials.



4 RIGHT



4 LEFT

4

Gong Kai (1222–1307), *The Demon Queller Zhong Kui Traveling with his Sister and a Retinue of Demons*, handscroll, ink on paper, 32.8 x 169.5 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Purchase, F1938.4.

Alternative views of Yuan painting coexisted with the cluster of concerns circulating around ideas of revolutionary change, epochal shift, and classical revival. One such alternative was embodied to some extent in Sherman Lee and Wai-kam Ho's *Chinese Art Under the Mongols* catalogue, with its inclusive attention to all modes and schools of painting, including conservative Northern styles, professional and artisanal figure painting (fig. 5), continuations of Southern Song genres, and court and religious painting (figs. 8, 9), even while Lee highlighted the revolutionary character of Yuan literary men's painting.<sup>20</sup> James Cahill's conference paper "Away from a Definition of Yuan Painting," prepared for the symposium associated with the Cleveland *Chinese Art Under the Mongols* show and thus some years in advance of the completion of his *Hills Beyond the River* book, acknowledged the diversity of Yuan painting by proposing that very complexity—coexisting stylistic lineages with disjunctive chronologies of development—as the characterizing feature of the Yuan.<sup>21</sup> Along with the multiple schools, genres, and types represented in the Cleveland show, Cahill cited another alternative formulation of Yuan painting found in Japanese art historiography: the concept of *Sōgenga* 宋元畫, or Song–Yuan painting. *Sōgenga* implied first and foremost that the Yuan was amalgamated with or was an aftermath or appendage of the Song, rather than constituting a distinctive art historical epoch, revolutionary or otherwise. The formulation was conditioned by historical Japanese patterns of taste and collecting of Chinese paintings, which for the Yuan period emphasized Buddhist and Taoist paintings,

along with followers of Southern Song court styles, rather than works by literati masters. Chan paintings by followers of Muqi 牧谿 (active mid-13th c.) and Liang Kai 梁楷 (active early 13th c.), or landscapes in the Ma-Xia 馬夏 manner by school followers such as Sun Junze 孫君澤 (active early 14th c.?) constituted the primary horizon of objects against which Japanese art historical formulations of the Yuan were constructed.<sup>22</sup>

Thus there was nothing intrinsic or inevitable about the shape of Yuan painting historiography. It was a byproduct of historical circumstances, configurations of interest, and vagaries of art historical debates. Its contingency as an art historical discourse is suggested by the shifting contours of its emphases and by the instability of its categories. Nonetheless, we can identify an emerging mainstream of Yuan painting studies in the period from about 1960 to 1990, even while keeping its constructedness firmly in view.

We might take as a token of these discursive constructs a painting such as Wu Zhen's depiction of *Zhong Shan* 中[山], or the "Central Mountain," of 1336, part of a joint handscroll of small Yuan paintings formerly in the Qing palace collection and now in the National Palace Museum Taipei (fig. 3). This is in some ways an ex-centric choice, a minor handscroll rather than one of the works made canonical by collecting history and art literature such as Huang Gongwang's *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* handscroll.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, Wu Zhen has historically been identified as one of the Four Yuan Masters, and his main period of activity lies close to the midpoint of the dynasty chronologically. In Cahill's discussion, the *Central Mountain* painting participates in the discourse of centrality in other ways, as a kind of degree-zero exemplification of scholar-amateur aesthetics, marked by unassertiveness, centered or "round" brushwork and repetition of abstracted formal structures.<sup>24</sup> In this formulation, the painting is an embodiment of plainness, of symmetrical stability, and an image of quiet power and simplicity. Pushing the interpretation further, the painting could also be seen as a soothing, undramatic caesura within the tumult of Yuan political life or an icon of the southern scholar's cultural heartland as a protected island of stability against the incursions of the Mongols. While probably depicting the central mountain near the Li River in Jiangsu, Wu Zhen's image might evoke a more profound sense of cultural centrality, borrowing some of the cosmological overtones of the Central Marchmount among the Five Sacred Mountains, and standing perhaps as an axis or pivot for the dynamic period that surrounded it.

Wu Zhen's painting of the *Central Mountain* does not, however, depend only upon modern art historical discourse and interpretation for its position of centrality. The painting was embedded in an early art historical construct, as part of a collective handscroll of works by Yuan scholar-amateur artists, including Zhao





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Attributed to Liu Guandao, *Khubilai Khan Hunting*, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 182.9 x 104.2 cm. Collection of the National Palace Museum Taipei.

Mengfu, his wife Guan Daosheng 管道昇 (1262–1319), and Ni Zan, as well as the late Yuan–early Ming painters Ma Wan 馬琬 (ca. 1310–1378) and Zhao Yuan, along with the lesser known Lin Juan’a 林卷阿 (active late 14th c.) and Zhuang Lin 莊麟 (active late 14th c.). This group of short handscrolls was either acquired ensemble or put together by the middle Ming collector Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525–1590) and transmitted through major Ming–Qing collections such as those of Liang Qingbiao 梁清標 (1620–1691) and An Qi 安岐 (ca. 1683–after 1744) before entering the Qing imperial collection of the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (r. 1736–1795), and serving as a kind of pocket visual encyclopedia of Yuan literati painting.<sup>25</sup> While separately none of these small paintings (each measuring about ten inches high and between two and four feet in length) would likely have been considered a major work, collectively they comprise an implied canonical lineage of Yuan masters from Zhao Mengfu through Wu Zhen to Ni Zan. Thematically the series includes bamboo, pure landscapes, and the most restrained of narratives: a scholar approaching a lodge, gentlemen conversing on a cliff, and Lu Yü 陸羽 brewing tea in a thatched cottage. Stylistically the group emphasizes ink monochrome performances executed in most cases with a light calligraphic touch, and some compositions verge on what we might call a minimalist simplicity, to use another anachronistic term of description.<sup>26</sup>



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Zhao Mengfu. *Horse and Groom*, dated 1296, handscroll, ink and colors on paper, length of entire scroll 303.3 x 177.1 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John M. Crawford, Jr. (1988.135).

Thus the construction of a central Yuan painting historiography unfolded over a long period and with multiple points of focus. The *Collective Handscroll of Yuan Dynasty Artists* that includes Wu Zhen's *Central Mountain* embodies a collecting and reception tradition from at least the mid-sixteenth century that emphasized quiet ink monochrome performances by scholar-amateur artists. Dong Qichang (1555–1636), who inscribed Zhuang Lin's painting in the *Yuan Collective Handscroll*, emphasized Zhao Mengfu and the Four Yuan Masters as subjects of discussion and as the Yuan period figureheads of his Southern School genealogy, further codifying this construct; his comments on Zhuang Lin's composition emphasize its connection to the early Southern school master Juran 巨然 (active ca. 960–985) and the aesthetic values of blandness over richness.<sup>27</sup> Dong Qichang's focus on Zhao Mengfu and the Four Great Masters and their associates had already been anticipated in the fifteenth-century by Du Qiong 杜瓊 (1396–1474), and in turn was duly performed and realized by later generations of so-called orthodox school painters.<sup>28</sup>

This mainstream of Yuan art historiography was further reified by the collecting patterns and historical pronouncements of the Qianlong emperor, shaped in turn by his admiration for Dong Qichang. The Qianlong emperor's main inscription on the *Collective Handscroll of Yuan Dynasty Artists* comments on Dong Qichang's earlier inscription and the history of the handscroll in Xiang Yuanbian's hands, but emphasizes the total transformation (or even "revolution," *yibian* 一變) that characterized the passage between Song and Yuan painting methods.<sup>29</sup> In Qianlong's account, the deep richness but somewhat wooden and labored quality of Song painting gives way to the lonely and desolate but lively *qiyun* 氣韻 character of the Yuan, best exemplified by Zhao Mengfu and the Four Great Masters.<sup>30</sup>

The modern revival of interest in the Yuan scholar-amateurs, after some reaction and denigration of the orthodox tradition in general by late Qing and early Republican era cultural reformers, was similarly multivalent.<sup>31</sup> Mid-twentieth-century Chinese scholarship found in the Yuan scholar-amateurs congenial pre-



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Wang Zhenpeng (ca. 1270s–after 1330), *Boya Playing the Qin*, handscroll, ink on silk, 31.4 x 92 cm. The Palace Museum, Beijing

figurations of political and cultural displacement, resistance, and alienation, and a focus for text-centric scholarship. Scholars active in America and Europe similarly discovered — or projected — the Yuan scholar painters as pioneers of artistic revolution, self-expression, classical revival, and the exploration of pictorial space.

Moving beyond this multilayered historical construct of a central Yuan painting has engaged a variety of approaches. Focusing on the chronological side of *Yuan* painting, its de-centering (notwithstanding the excellent research on the Yuan that continues to be produced) involved shifts in the center of gravity of Chinese painting studies both back — to the Song and especially the late Northern Song with its equally or more complex cultural politics and art theory — and forward, along with most humanities studies, China-centered and otherwise, toward versions of the early modern and modern, whether located in the Ming, the early Qing, or the late Qing/Republican era.<sup>32</sup>

Focusing on the *painting* side of the Yuan painting construct, de-centering involves versions of visual culture and visibility studies paradigms. This can imply a deprivileging of scholar-amateur painting or of painting in general, in a move toward a broader consideration of Yuan visual culture, including architecture and the plastic arts.<sup>33</sup> The category of painting is liable to considerable expansion, beyond scroll paintings in whatever style, to include mural paintings and painted ceramics, and on to the larger realm of the pictorial in general — prints and pictorial designs on lacquer, metalwork, and textiles.<sup>34</sup> Visibility studies direct our attention above and below the level of the object and its perception to the social values, attitudes, and institutions in which practices of looking were embedded, and to the psychological realms of looking invested with desire and fantasy.<sup>35</sup> The conspicuous shift in the primary topics of Yuan art dissertations, from overwhelmingly single artist-centered monographs in the 1970s and 1980s to investigations of collecting, religious institutions, printing and publishing, art historical and art theoretical texts, peripheral regional art networks, and gender issues in the 1990s and up to the present, embodies that turn toward visual culture and visibility studies paradigms.<sup>36</sup>

Yuan painting as an art historiographic construct and as a field of study has thus been de-centered along multiple axes — of chronology, of media, and of the expanded field of visual culture and visibility centered studies. An additional geo-





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8  
*Assembly of Daoist Pantheon*,  
 1325, section of a mural painting,  
 Sanqing Hall of Yongle gong Daoist  
 Monastery, originally located in  
 Yongji, Shanxi.

graphical axis is perhaps most directly germane to the spatial underpinnings of the notion of centrality. Yuan scholar-amateur painting studies focused primarily on the limited Jiangnan region of southeastern China, expanded primarily by accounts of the service or experiences of southern artists or patrons in the northern capital of Daidu 大都 (Beijing). The limitations of Jiangnan-centered approaches have been addressed by studies that focus on court patronage and politically motivated painting in the court orbit, or studies that deal with mural paintings in the Buddhist and Daoist temples of Shanxi 山西 (fig. 8).<sup>37</sup> The *de-centering* of Jiangnan is simultaneously a *re-centering* of Yuan painting studies toward north China or the capital, which might be extended toward a fully Mongol-centered Yuan painting history. Mongol patronage of court painting was much less robust than in the Qing, where a Manchu-centered historiographic discourse has firmly taken hold in Qing historical studies and to a lesser degree in Qing art history, with an explosion of interest in court painting and architecture.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, recent studies of Yuan imperial portraiture, of Princess Sengge Ragi 祥哥剌吉 (ca. 1283–1331) as collector and patroness, of Yuan court institutions of collecting and painting, of Lamaist Buddhist iconography in Yuan art, and of mural paintings and their relationship to religious figure painters such as Yan Hui 顏輝 (active late 13th–early 14th c.), suggest the potential of a shifted center of focus for Yuan painting studies.<sup>39</sup>

If painters such as Zhao Mengfu, Wu Zhen, or Huang Gongwang were among the central figures in the mainstream account of Yuan painting, an artist such as Wang Zhenpeng 王振鵬 (fl. ca. 1280s–ca. 1329) might be more representative of a re-centered conception of Yuan painting. Wang Zhenpeng's main period of activity was during the early-middle Yuan, when the interactions between the court and scholar-amateurs from Jiangnan were most acute as a feature of court art. Wang Zhenpeng was primarily a figure and architectural, or *jiehua* 界畫, painter rather than a landscapist or bamboo painter, and so his thematic concerns encompass the narrative and documentary sides of Yuan pictorial production. A native of Zhejiang in the region of the old Southern Song capital, he was thoroughly enmeshed in the patronage networks of the Yuan court, thus exemplifying the axis of cultural exchange between the southeast and the capital. Wang Zhenpeng was involved with the circle of Princess Sengge Ragi, and his paintings often bear colophons by the network of scholars and connoisseurs in her orbit. Thus his career connects with

recent scholarly interest in social networks, cultural institutions, and the climate of art production and reception alike.<sup>40</sup>

Wang Zhenpeng's painting themes acknowledge the prestige of scholar-amateur values of sympathetic understanding and harmony within an elite subculture, as exemplified in his depiction of *Boya Playing the Qin* (fig. 7) for Zhong Ziqi, his ideal and unique listener and sympathetic friend. The presumed themes of Boya's musical performance, "High Mountains and Flowing Water," also allude to the lodging of human emotions in the natural world and to the landscape-centered aesthetics of scholar-amateur paintings.<sup>41</sup> The painting is an icon of the scholar-amateur ethos of interpersonal attunement, wordless communion, musical-rhythmic aesthetics that affords primacy to brushwork, and of high culture and talent, even while it was painted for Princess Sengge. At the same time, Wang Zhenpeng's paintings include documentary images (albeit historically displaced to the time and site of the Northern Song capital) of court life and festival culture, such as the scrolls depicting *Dragon Boat Regattas on Jinming Lake* during the Spring Festival celebrations, that he painted for Emperor Renzong 仁宗 in 1310 and for Princess Sengge in 1323.<sup>42</sup> The style of those paintings engages the full apparatus of *jiehua*, ruled-outline paintings of architecture and carpentered objects broadly distinct from the scholar-amateur landscapes.

There have been some efforts to outline a full-fledged, pan-Asian Mongol context for Yuan painting. These include suggestions by Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt and James Cahill that some features of iconography and style found in Yuan paintings — such as the emaciated and foreshortened horse bodies that appear in works by Gong Kai 龔開 (1222–1307), Ren Renfa 任仁發 (1255–1328), Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu (fig. 6), the dark-bodied, racially exotic muscular demons of Gong Kai's and Yan Hui's *Zhong Kui* compositions (fig. 4), or the bright isolated colors of Zhao Mengfu's *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* (fig. 1) — are related to or indebted to old Tang and Liao painting traditions that spread to central and western Asia, as documented in miniature paintings preserved in the Topkapi Saray collection, and which then were reintroduced to China under the Mongol Yuan regime (cf. figs. 1 and 2).<sup>43</sup>

The chronology of that sort of relationship is complex and problematic, but another of Wang Zhenpeng's paintings suggests related kinds of broader Asian connections.<sup>44</sup> His handscroll of *Mahaprajapati with the Infant Buddha* has multidimensional relationships to many of the likely concerns of a Mongol- or court-centered Yuan painting history (fig. 9). The scroll exemplifies how far the center of gravity of Yuan painting studies might be shifted without needing to move beyond the work of a well-known artist. Wang Zhenpeng's painting is of a Buddhist subject, inflected with a certain Central-Asian or Nepalese aura through the heavily





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Wang Zhenpeng (ca. 1270s–after 1330),  
*Mahaprajapati Nursing the Infant  
Buddha*, section of a handscroll, ink  
and color on silk, 31.9 x 94.4 cm.,  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Special  
Chinese and Japanese Fund, 1912,  
12.902. Photograph © 2009 Museum  
of Fine Arts Boston.

outlined, concentric drapery drawing and stylized shading.<sup>45</sup> Such stylistic connections evoke the whole complex of imported styles brought to the early Yuan court by the Nepalese sculptor-architect Anige 阿尼哥 (1245–1306), as well as the inner Asian connections of Mongol society and Lamaist Buddhist patronage.<sup>46</sup> The subject is equally distinctive — an image of the aunt of the infant Sakyamuni in a palatial setting that might immediately evoke the contemporary context of Princess Sengge as an imperial relative, although the painting was likely produced for Zhang Zhu 張翥, a Chinese scholar-official at the Yuan court.<sup>47</sup> In any event, the painting recalls the significant role of women's culture at the Yuan court in both its subject matter and, through Wang Zhenpeng's links to Princess Sengge's circle, its wider network of production and patronage. Finally, the accomplished linearity of the painting and its horizontal composition suggest the possibility of a mural painting source, or at least the transferability of the composition between handscroll and mural formats, and thereby a potential link to Yuan mural painting studies.

De-centering the Yuan southeastern scholar-amateur painters and their associated historiography should not imply that they will simply be devalued or ignored, or replaced by variously capital- or court-centered, Mongol, or religion- and visual culture-centered art historiography. Much of the recent focus on alternative arenas of painting, for example, has been more relational than oppositional to earlier concerns. Thus Wang Zhenpeng is of interest for his negotiation of the themes of scholar-amateur and documentary *jiehua* painters alike, and for his engagement with circles of Mongol patrons as well as Chinese scholar-officials at court (figs. 7, 9). The renewed interest in Zhao Mengfu and his circle presents their political careers as actively interested rather than merely a burden, and illuminates their involvement with the foreign and with culturally multivalent themes such as horse painting (fig. 6).<sup>48</sup> The notion of de-centering can imply a corresponding re-centering of other concerns and in different locales, but it might equally lead toward a replacement of the whole apparatus of center and periphery, or discrete categories of schools and groups, with models of networks that more easily accommodate changed configurations and connections. For example, central scholar-amateur painting genres such as bamboo, plum, and landscape might be set against similar subjects in woodblock printed books, ceramic and lacquer design.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, rather than focusing on the personal circumstances and local cultural associations



of the numerous particular landscapes that populate the standard canon of Yuan painting — the Fouyu 浮玉 Mountains, the Qiao 鵲 and Hua 華 Mountains (fig. 1), the *Central Mountain*, (fig. 3) the Fuchun 富春 Mountains, and the Qingbian 青卞 Mountains among others — these representations as a group might be viewed as constituting a kind of counter-geography of significant sites in southeastern China (or significant for southeasterners) set against the projection of Mongol control over Daidu and greater Asia.<sup>50</sup> Ranging still more broadly, we could juxtapose the visual signs of racial diversity and exoticism in Gong Kai's *Zhong Kui Traveling* (fig. 4) with *Khubilai Khan Hunting* (fig. 5), and go on to trace larger networks of trans-cultural encounter and appropriation that could include Zhao Mengfu (figs. 1, 2, and 6) and Wang Zhenpeng (fig. 9), all set within larger horizons of political assertion and critique.<sup>51</sup> Yuan painting viewed in this way, set within continental contexts and among multilayered cultural arenas, requires more global than narrowly centered perspectives.

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## NOTES

- 1 See Chu-tsing Li, *The Autumn Colors on the Ch'iao and Hua Mountains: A Landscape by Chao Meng-fu* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Supplementum 21, 1965); James Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River: Chinese Painting of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279–1368* (New York: John Weatherhill, 1976); Sherman E. Lee and Wai-kam Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968); Max Loehr, "Chinese Painting After Sung" (Ryerson Lecture, Yale Art Gallery, March 2, 1967); Wen C. Fong, "Toward a Structural Analysis of Chinese Landscape Painting," *Art Journal* 28, no. 4 (1969): 388–97. See also Chang Kuang-pin, ed., *Yüan sidajia 元四大家* (The Four Great Masters of the Yuan) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1975).
- 2 See Susan Nelson Arkush, "Ni Tsan and the Image of Yuan Painting" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1978); Richard Ellis Vinograd, "Wang Meng's 'Pien Mountains': The Landscape of Eremitism in Later Fourteenth Century Chinese Painting" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979); Curtis Hansman Brizendine, "Cloudy Mountains: Kao K'o-kung (1248–1310) and the Mi Tradition" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1980); Toh Sugimura, "The Chinese Impact on Certain Fifteenth Century Persian Miniature Paintings from the Albums (Hazine Library nos. 2153, 2154, 2160) in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1981); Marsha Smith Weidner, "Painting and Patronage at the Mongol Court of China, 1260–1368" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1982); William John Hoar, "Wang Mien and the Confucian Factor in Chinese Plum Painting" (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 1983); Sungmii Lee Han, "Wu Chen's 'Mo-chu p'u': Literati Painter's Manual on Ink Bamboo" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1983); Marilyn Wong Fu, "Hsien-yu Shu's Calligraphy and his 'Admonitions' Scroll of 1299" 3 vols. (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1983); Shih Shou-chien, "Eremitism in Landscape Paintings by Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–before 1307)" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1984); James Jay Robinson, "The Vitality of Style: Aspects of Flower and Bird Painting During the Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368)" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1984); Claudia G. Brown, "Ch'en Ju-yen and Late Yuan Painting in Suchou" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1985); Roberta R. Bickford, "'Momei' (Ink Plum): The Emergence, Formation, and Development of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre" 2 vols. (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1987); Choon San Leong, "Wang Meng's Development as an Artist as Seen Through His Depiction of Scholars' Retreats" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1988); David Ake Sensabaugh, "Chao Yuan and Late Yuan—Early Ming Painting" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1990); and Sandra Jean Wetzel, "Sheng Mou: The Relationship Between Professional and Literati Painters in Yuan-dynasty China" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1991).
- 3 See Ankeny Weitz, "Collecting and Connoisseurship in Early Yuan China: Zhou Mi's *Yunyan guoyan lu*" 2 vols. (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1994); Anning Jing, "Yongle Palace: The Transformation of the Daoist Pantheon during the Yuan Dynasty (1260–1368)" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1994); Lucille Chia, "Printing for Profit: The Commercial Printers of Jianyang, Fujian (Song-Ming)" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1996); Shane

- McCausland, "Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) and the Revolution of Elite Culture in Mongol China" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2000); Yeongchau Chou, "Reexamination of Tang Hou and his 'Huajian'" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 2001); Jennifer Gillian Purtle, "The Production of Painting, Place, and Identity in Song-Yuan (960–1368) Fujian" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2001); Elizabeth Marie Owen, "Love Lost: Qian Xuan (c. 1235–c. 1307) and Images of Emperor Ming Huang and Yang Guifei" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2005); and Wei Yang, "Gender and Ethnicity in Yuan-Dynasty (1269–1368) Painting" (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 2005).
- 4 Weidner, "Painting and Patronage," 192–99.
  - 5 The prehistory of those competitions circulating around Yuan painting might be traced to the Qian Xuan (Ch'ien Hsüan) debates embodied in Richard Edwards, "Ch'ien Hsüan and 'Early Autumn,'" *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 7 (1953): 71–83; James Cahill, "Ch'ien Hsüan and His Figure Paintings," *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 7 (1958): 11–29; and Wen Fong, "The Problem of Ch'ien Hsüan," *Art Bulletin* 42 (September 1960): 173–89.
  - 6 For excerpts from Dong Qichang's discussions of Yuan painting, see Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang (1555–1636)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1971), 174–5. See also H. C. Chang, "Inscriptions, Stylistic Analysis, and Traditional Judgement in Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing Painting," *Asia Major* 7 (1959): 207–27.
  - 7 Li, *Autumn Colors*, 58.
  - 8 Li, *Autumn Colors*, 78–9, 84.
  - 9 See Wen C. Fong, *Images of the Mind* (Princeton: Art Museum, 1984), 68–70; also his "Toward a Structural Analysis," 393–95, for an earlier discussion of the spatial illusionism of Yuan painting.
  - 10 Loehr, *Chinese Painting After Sung*, 3, 5, 12, 20.
  - 11 Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, 26, 51, 62.
  - 12 Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, 27, 51.
  - 13 See Wai-kam Ho, "Chinese Under the Mongols," in Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, 73–112; also James Cahill, *Chinese Painting* (Geneva: Skira, 1960), 99, 101, 104–05, 113, for comparisons of the Yuan literati painters to various nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists, composers, and movements, and its expressionist, revolutionary, and non-mimetic character. Lee specifically cites Cahill's essay from the same year: "Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting," in Arthur Wright, ed., *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 115–40; see Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, 52, n. 99.
  - 14 See Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 37 (quoting Loehr); 86–113, on Huang Gongwang's painting theory and formal painting structures; 3, 176, for the Yuan revolution in painting.
  - 15 Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 175–76.
  - 16 Cahill, *Chinese Painting*, 5, cites André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949). Loehr, *Chinese Painting After Sung*, cites Etienne Gilson, *Painting and Reality* (New York: Bollingen Series, 1957) and Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Of the origin and goal of history), in the context of his discussion of the Yuan. Fong, "Toward a Structural Analysis" cites Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, 1915 (New York: Dover Paperback, 1950); Meyer Schapiro's article "Style" in A. L. Kroeber, ed., *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 287–312; Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955); George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); and E. H. Gombrich, in an unidentified quotation.
  - 17 Influential studies of Western art published in the period from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s were often uncongenial to the China specialists' views of their fundamental concerns. Compare, for example, Wen Fong on spatial illusionism in Yuan painting with John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber 1957, 1967), 67–69, which emphasizes the ongoing importance of the decorative, negative surface in Chinese art. Also compare Chu-tsing Li on Zhao Mengfu's classicism with E. H. Gombrich, "Norm and Form: The Stylistic Categories of Art History and Their Origins in Renaissance Ideals," in his *Norm and Form; Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985; first published 1966), 81–98, 90, for Chinese art as specifically "unclassical . . . in so far as the Chinese artist never rejected principles of which they could have no cognizance." Compare also Cahill, *Chinese Painting*, on Chinese painting's familiarity, expressionism, and similarity to nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists and movements with Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture; Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 220; especially the essay "'American Type' Painting," first published in 1955 and revised 1958, where Oriental influence on the original "abstract expressionists" is specifically discounted as "cant."



- 18 Li, *Autumn Colors*, 19–20, 81.
- 19 Chu-ting Li, “Recent Studies on Zhao Mengfu’s Painting in China,” *Artibus Asiae* 53:1–2 (1993): 195–210, more explicitly discusses the history of political and ideological concerns in Yuan art scholarship in the People’s Republic of China.
- 20 Lee and Ho, *Chinese Art Under the Mongols*, 30–45.
- 21 James Cahill, “Away from a Definition of Yüan Painting” (paper presented at the *Yüan Art Symposium*, Cleveland Museum of Art, October 11 and 12, 1968) 45–74, of the conference proceedings. My thanks to James Cahill for making the transcripts of the symposium papers and discussions available to me.
- 22 See Cahill, “Away from a Definition,” 46. See also James Cahill, *Sōgen-ga: 12–14th Century Chinese Painting as Collected and Appreciated in Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University Art Museum, 1982); Tokyo National Museum ed., *Sōgen no Kaiga* 宋元の繪畫 (Sung and Yuan Painting) (Tōkyō: Benridō, 1962); also Tokyo National Museum ed., *Gendai doshakuga jimbutsuga: tokubetsu tenkan* 元代道釋人物畫：特別展覧 (Special exhibition of Yuan dynasty Daoist and Buddhist figure painting) (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1975).
- 23 Celia Carrington Riely, “Tung Ch’i-ch’ang’s Ownership of Huang Kung-wang’s ‘Dwelling in the Fu-ch’un Mountains,’ with a Revised Dating for Chang Ch’ou’s *Ch’ing-ho shu-hua fang*,” *Archives of Asian Art* 28 (1974–75): 57–76.
- 24 See Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, 69–71.
- 25 See *Chinese Art Treasures: A Selected Group of Objects from the Chinese National Palace Museum and the Chinese National Central Museum, Taichung, Taiwan* (Geneva: Skira, 1961), 170–73, cat. no. 90.
- 26 This description is however anticipated in the language of An Qi’s description of the abbreviated brushwork and pale ink of Ni Zan’s handscroll in the series; see *Gugong cang hua lu* 故宮藏畫錄 (Catalogue of the painting collection in the National Palace Museum) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1993), vol. 3, 162, no. 136.
- 27 See Bush, “Chinese Literati on Painting,” 174–75. For Dong’s inscription, see National Palace Museum ed., *Gugong shuhua lu* 故宮書畫錄 (Catalogue of paintings and calligraphy in the National Palace Museum, Taipei), 4 vols. (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1965), vol. 2, 303–04.
- 28 See Bush, “Chinese Literati on Painting,” 163–64.
- 29 See *Gugong shuhua lu*, vol. 2, 304.
- 30 *Gugong shuhua lu*, vol. 2, 304.
- 31 For the early twentieth-century critical denigration of the orthodox school, see Aida-Yuen Wong, “A New Life for Literati Painting in the Early Twentieth Century: Eastern Art and Modernity, a Transcultural Narrative?” *Artibus Asiae* 60, no. 2 (2000): 312.
- 32 See, among other examples, Julia K. Murray, *Ma Hezhi and the Illustration of the Book of Odes* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Heping Liu, “Painting and Commerce in Northern Song Dynasty China, 960–1126” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1997); Alfreda Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2000); Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003); Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum; Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1998).
- 33 See Nancy Riva Shatzman Steinhardt, “Imperial Architecture Under Mongolian Patronage: Khubilai’s Imperial City of Daidu” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1981); also her *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); also Jing, “Yongle Palace.”
- 34 See Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, “Zhu Haogu Reconsidered: A New Date for the ROM Painting and the Southern Shanxi Buddhist-Daoist Style,” *Artibus Asiae* 48, no. 1–2 (1987): 5–38; also Chia, “Printing for Profit.”
- 35 See Weitz, “Collecting and Connoisseurship”; Owen, “Love Lost”; and WeiYang, “Gender and Ethnicity.”
- 36 Compare the dissertation topics listed in notes 2 and 3 above.
- 37 See Weidner, “Painting and Patronage”; Anning Jing, “Yongle Palace”; Steinhardt, “Zhu Haogu Reconsidered”; see also Ka Bo Tsang, “Further Observations on the Yuan Wall Painter Zhu Haogu and the Relationship of the Chunyang Hall Wall Paintings to ‘The Maitreya Paradise’ at the ROM,” *Artibus Asiae* 52, no. 1–2 (1992): 94–118; Anning Jing, “The Yuan Buddhist Mural of the Paradise of Bhaisajyaguru,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal* 26 (1991): 147–66.
- 38 See, among many examples, Berger, *Empire of Emptiness*.
- 39 See Zaixin Hong with Yiqiang Cao, “Pictorial Representation and Mongol Institutions in Khubilai Khan Hunting,” in Cary Y. Liu and Dora C. Y. Ching eds., *Arts of the Sung and Yüan: Ritual, Ethnicity, and Style in Painting* (Princeton, N.J.: The Art Museum, Princeton University, 1999), 181–201; Smith Weidner, “Painting and Patronage”; also Jerome Silbergeld, “In Praise of Government: Chao Yung’s Paint-

- ing, *Noble Steeds*, and Late Yuan Politics,” *Artibus Asiae* 46, no. 3 (1985): 159–98. See also James Cahill, “The Yuan Dynasty,” in Richard M. Barnhart, James Cahill, and Wu Hung, eds., *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 152–53; also Peter C. Sturman, “Confronting Dynastic Change: Painting After Mongol Reunification of North and South China,” *Res* 35 (Spring 1999): 142–69.
- 40 See Weidner, “Painting and Patronage,” 8–38, 39–184. See also Chen Yunru (Donald Brix, trans.), “Bedazzling Free-form Assembly: Wang Chen-p’eng’s Ruled Line Painting and Collecting Activities of the Yuan Court (Art History Forum at the National Palace Museum, November, 2003) [http://arthf.npm.gov.tw/art/dc/d\\_types.asp?item=923&D=2003/12](http://arthf.npm.gov.tw/art/dc/d_types.asp?item=923&D=2003/12) (accessed March 28, 2009).
- 41 See *Zhongguo meishu quanji, huihua bian* 5, *Yuandai huihua* 中國美術全集繪畫編, 元代繪畫 (Complete compendium of Chinese art, Painting series 5, Yuan painting) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), 29, no. 54.
- 42 See Cahill, “Yuan Dynasty,” 149–50.
- 43 See James Cahill, “Some Alternative Sources for Archaistic Elements in the Paintings of Qian Xuan and Zhao Mengfu,” *Ars Orientalis* 28 (1998): 65–75. See also Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, “Chinese Ladies in the Istanbul Albums,” in Ernst J. Grube and Eleanor Sims, eds., *Between China and Iran: Paintings from Four Istanbul Albums*, Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia, no. 10 (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1975), 77–88; also Steinhardt, “Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai: An Istanbul Album Painter and a Chinese Painter of the Mongolian Period,” *Muqarnas* 4 (1987): 59–71.
- 44 Feliz Cagman and Zeren Tanindi, with J. M. Rogers, *The Topkapi Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 65–71, where the Topkapi Saray paintings are presented as later derivatives of Chinese models, equivalent to the early Ming or later in date. See p. 70, no. 48, where the Topkapi Saray *Autumn Landscape* (fig. 2 in the present article) is described as a “pastiche, at several removes from any Chinese original,” and dated ca. 1370; cf. 85–156. See also Toh Sugimura, “Chinese Impact.”
- 45 See Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1,000 Years of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1997), 212–13.
- 46 See Anning Jing, “The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306), a Nepalese Artist at the Yuan Court,” *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1–2 (1994): 40–86.
- 47 Jing, “Portraits of Khubilai Khan,” 212–13.
- 48 See Jonathan Hay, “Khubilai’s Groom,” *Res* 17–18 (Spring/Autumn 1989): 117–39; Silbergeld, “In Praise of Government”; McCausland, “Zhao Mengfu.”
- 49 See Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality*, 25–76, for parallel approaches to Ming visual art.
- 50 See Cahill, *Hills Beyond a River*, plates 7, 41, 50, 53, 56, 58, 60, for these and other examples of specific landscapes.
- 51 See Steinhardt, “Siyah Qalem and Gong Kai,” 66, for a possible political critique embedded in Gong Kai’s painting.

## I DON'T BELIEVE IN THE LITERATI BUT I MISS THEM: A POSTSCRIPT

JULIAN BARNES begins his book, *Nothing to be Frightened Of*, a meditation on the fear of death, with the words "I don't believe in God, but I miss Him."<sup>1</sup> My paraphrase of Barnes's opening sentence expresses something that other historians of Chinese art might feel as well. Many of us grew up, academically and professionally, with a vision of Yuan dynasty painting for which the essays by Jerome Silbergeld and Richard Vinograd in this special issue of *Ars Orientalis* serve as historiographic obituaries. In essence, what we learned was that a momentous change in Chinese painting took place during the period of Mongol rule, when literati or scholar-amateur painters of the Yuan, led by the example of Zhao Mengfu, turned away from the conventions of the preceding Song dynasty in favor of a mode of painting that placed little value on representational likeness. Retreating from the reality of life under Mongol rule, the "Four Great Masters of the Yuan" and other high-minded non-professional artists, working mainly in the Jiangnan region, produced paintings animated by allusions to earlier styles and use of calligraphic brushwork that is interpreted as traces of the mind and character of the artists.

Nobody ever believed this was the whole story. For more than forty years, scholars such as James Cahill have insisted on the diversity of Yuan painting—the continuities with, as well as the departures from, Song court styles; the vitality of painting by professional artists at the Mongol court little affected by scholar-amateurs; and the assimilation into Chinese painting of foreign elements nurtured by the pan-Asian extent of the Mongol empire.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of a Yuan revolution in painting, led by the literati, was a durable and vivid narrative device: it is always easier to tell a story in which there are dramatic and unexpected changes than it is to recount a tale in which one thing just follows along after another. It made perfect sense historically as well that a political cataclysm as vast as the Mongol conquest of China should be reflected in the visual arts, and interpreting literati painting as a form of intellectual and spiritual resistance to foreign rule added a heroic glow to the careers of these artists. Without pushing the argument too far, it is probably true as well that the notion of artists giving vent to deeply rooted psychological dispositions, as the Yuan literati were understood to have done in their paintings, added to the allure of these artists for viewers and readers familiar with the critical discourse of abstract expressionism and other modernist art movements. All in all, the Yuan revolution and the accompanying triumph of literati painting, which would shape the later history of Chinese art, was a compelling tale, whether presented in books, articles, and classroom lectures, or made the theme of museum exhibitions.

But as art history has become increasingly skeptical of canonical traditions and elite practices, things look very different. The literati have been dethroned. Probing deeper into historical sources and examining long-familiar paintings with



fresh eyes, art historians who have concentrated on the Yuan period in the past decade or so, like scholars of Chinese social and economic history, stress the continuities more than the ruptures observable from the late Song through the early Ming period.<sup>3</sup> Artists and connoisseurs once assumed to have been loyalists who resisted foreign rule are now understood to have accommodated themselves with little difficulty to the Mongol dynasty. As Jerome Silbergeld and Richard Vinograd point out, we are learning also that painters believed to have distanced themselves from tawdry commercial concerns had few qualms about the possibility of making money from the production and sale of art. Boundaries between the styles and achievements of Song and Yuan artists, professional and amateur, have been permanently blurred. Even the hallowed notion of literati painting as a form of self-expression becomes less convincing when we are reminded that the archetypal literatus Ni Zan, in spite of his frequently quoted assertions about making paintings simply to express his feelings, dashed off sketchy, abbreviated works (among which, quite likely, are paintings prized today as inspired improvisations), to repay social obligations.

Several of the essays in this collection demonstrate the fruitful directions that studies of Yuan painting not centered on the literati have taken. Although Zhao Mengfu is a key figure in Uta Lauer's study of painting in monasteries during the Yuan period, it is the process through which works were replicated and transmitted within Buddhist communities, not literati circles, that Lauer's research illuminates. In her essay, Marsha Weidner explores the role of Buddhist monasteries of the late Yuan and early Ming—scholarly terrain almost completely neglected in earlier histories of Chinese art premised on the assumption that these institutions were important only for their role in perpetuating conservative styles of mural painting. By combing local histories and the writings of monks such as Laifu and Puxia, Weidner is able to show that Yuan monasteries were sites of dynamic interaction between clerics and literati. Although the extensive art collections of monasteries, like the buildings that housed them, suffered widespread destruction, Weidner's research recovers some of this legacy. Archaeological rather than archival material allows Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt to radically undermine assumptions about the ethnic identity of figures represented in tomb murals from the Yuan period. She convincingly interprets these images not as scenes of daily life but as idealized visualization of the deceased in their posthumous existence. Based on inscriptions that accompany the tomb paintings, she proves that people who were ethnically Han Chinese had themselves, or their relatives, shown in Mongol garb while surrounded by Chinese accoutrements and decorative motifs. What the tombs murals Steinhardt introduces reflect is a willingness on the part of Chinese subjects to take on the ethnicity of their Mongol rulers—a historical phenomenon that por-

table paintings transmitted through private and imperial collections had never revealed.

In spite of the displacement of literati artists from their former position of centrality in histories of Chinese painting, works associated with these artists continue to raise questions that are fundamental to the study of the history of art. Among these are questions addressed in the essays by Joseph Chang, Maxwell Hearn, David Sensabaugh, and Eugene Wang: What is the relationship between the circumstances of an artist's life and the works he produces? How does knowledge brought by the viewer to the experience of a work of art change how it is perceived? How does pictorial style convey meaning?

There is a fundamental assumption embedded in traditional Chinese connoisseurship and critical theory, and reflected in much modern Western scholarship, that the key to understanding a painting by a literati artist is to understand the life of the individual who painted it. This is implicit in the excellent sinological sleuthing in Joseph Chang's paper, which reconstructs networks of friendship and familial bonds within which artists such as Zhao Mengfu and Wang Meng lived and worked. Knowing that Wang Meng's *The Humble Hermit of Clouds and Woods* was painted for his cousin Cui Sheng locates this scroll in a history of works produced, copied, exchanged, and viewed by people linked across generations by bonds of marriage and property. Exactly how this knowledge changes the way we interpret the meaning of the painting is less clear. Based on deep knowledge of Zhao Mengfu's biography, Maxwell Hearn attributes quite specific meaning to Zhao Mengfu's *Twin Pines, Level Distance*. Stylistically, as Hearn shows, the painting is an art historical exercise—a paraphrase in a simplified brush-and-ink idiom of the painting style of Guo Xi, whose works Zhao Mengfu came to know during his period of service in northern China and through his friendships with northern collectors. Hearn suggests that the imagery of the painting also reflects the circumstances of Zhao Mengfu's political career and the artist's "stubborn sense of integrity and determination." The central challenge of reading paintings in this way, as indexical signs of shifting political or psychological conditions, lies in establishing a causal relationship between biographical incident and resultant artistic product. Zhao Mengfu worked in a bewildering variety of pictorial styles in a wide range of genres. To assume that his restless quest for new ways of making pictures was always *secondary* to or driven by a larger goal of finding new ways to achieve "self-expression" runs the risk of overlooking the drama inherent in the act of painting itself. We also probably should attend more to another powerful motivation for making paintings: the sheer pleasure that the act of painting can afford.

Traditionally, brushwork has been seen as the supreme vehicle of self-expression in Yuan painting. In his essay, David Sensabaugh proposes an alternative

form of what he calls “fashioning identity” adopted by Yuan literati in the fourteenth century. Instead of making paintings themselves, friends and patrons of artists, such as Yang Qian and Gu Dehui, acting as editors rather than authors, assembled hand scrolls that combined their portraits or representations of their retreats with title-pieces, poems, and colophons; although they did not create the individual elements of these composite works, the gentlemen who assembled the scrolls intended them to be understood as reflections of their self-chosen personas and tastes

The protocols for interpreting a literati painting as an autobiographic artifact depend, of course, on identifying the artist as a member of the literati class—only these artists, not professionals, were expected to imbue their works with assertions of their own personalities and moods. But how do we categorize anonymous works, or paintings by artists about whom nothing is known, that could be placed stylistically in either the professional or literati camps? Eugene Wang confronts this problem in his essay about a painting of insects preying on each other titled *World of Vitality* by an artist named Chufang, who probably bore the surname Xie. This scroll, an example of what Wang calls “polychrome realism,” could just as easily be the work of a professional painter as it could be the work of a full-fledged literatus such as Qian Xuan, who also, it happens, painted to make a living. Should we attempt to read the painting as a work of self-expression? Rather than becoming bogged down with this problem, Wang tackles another fundamental issue: the relationship between the subject matter of a painting, with all the poetic or historical associations it may carry, and the pictorial style in which the subject matter is rendered. This leads to a subtle exploration of the apparent tension between the potential violence in *World of Vitality* and the restrained, beautifully wrought manner in which the images of menaced and menacing insects were painted. The history of art is, of course, full of examples of horrific images that seduce visually through their meticulous, jewel-like execution—one thinks of Northern Renaissance paintings of the Crucifixion or various martyrdoms; conversely, images of innocuous subjects such as flowers, when painted by someone like Xu Wei, can suggest a struggle to the death between the artist and his materials. Viewed from another perspective, Wang’s observations about *World of Vitality* remind us of how rarely violence of any kind is depicted in Chinese painting, outside Buddhist hell scenes or other religious subjects.

The de-centering of Yuan painting in the study of Chinese art history and the dimming of the literati within the constellation of topics attracting the attention of scholars echo bigger changes in the field during the past couple of decades. What we have witnessed is a shift away from painting of the Song through the Qing



## NOTES

- 1 Julian Barnes, *Nothing to be Frightened Of* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).
- 2 I am grateful to Professor Cahill for sending me a copy of his paper, "Against a Definition of Yuan Painting," and the transcripts of discussions held on the occasion of the exhibition *Chinese Art Under the Mongols* at the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968.
- 3 Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn, eds., *The Sung-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003). See Paul Jakov Smith, "Introduction: Problematizing the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," 1–34.

periods as the principal focus of graduate training toward much greater interest in early art and archaeology and in contemporary art. Given the bracingly heterodox and unpredictable nature of the field, however, it is hard to foresee the emergence of any one period or set of topics that will become central, or be de-centered, any time soon.

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